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EGO 5

MY BOOKS

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GEMEL IN LONDON

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KINGDOMS FOR HORSES
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MORE FIRST NIGHTS
THE AMAZING THEATRE

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RACHEL

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SPEAK FOR ENGLAND
HERE'S RICHNESS !

Autobiography

EGO
EGO 2
EGO 8
EGO A.



The Author

E G O 5

AGAIN MORE OF
THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF
JAMES AGATE

Moi, dis-je, et c'est assez. Je marche, faites-Moi place. Je parle, écoutez-Moi. Je dors, regardez-Moi dormir. Moi, et non pas d'autres. Moi hier, Moi aujourd'hui, Moi demain, Moi toujours et, après Moi, Moi encore . . .

JULES JANIN, *Réponse à M. de Balzac.*

"This book should be called
Paroum in Mullo."

LEO PAVIA

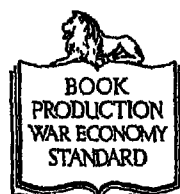


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THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED IN
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July 28 "You realise," said Jack Bergel, "what bringing *Sunday*. this out now means?" *This was Ego 4.* "It means that you regard your Diary as more important than the war." I said, "Well, isn't it? The war is vital, not important."

I take it that to Schönberg atonalism, to Hindemith serialism, and to both the inter-relationship of chromaticism, mathematics, and acoustics are more important than whether the British can destroy Hamburg before the Nazis destroy Hull. If at this point somebody tells me that a Nazi victory would put an end to music both tonal and atonal I just say, "Bosh!" Look at this matter from another angle. Because I am suddenly stricken with cancer, must cancer become my whole world? Again I say, "Bosh!" Cancer has become vital to me, but not important; except in so far as I am a coward it does not fill my mind. It was advisable recently that I should have the coping of my house attended to; on the day when I found a large lump of stone lying on my door-step I realised that "advisable" had become "imperative." But I have still no interest in coping-stones; though they cut my head open, my mind remains closed to them. In other words, coping-stones are vital, not important. Should I, finding myself looking down the barrel of a Nazi rifle, hold that piece of ironmongery to be more real than *Ego*? Yes, and I should be wrong, and to know how wrong I have only to ask which will be more real after the shot is fired, seeing that if I still have a name in the world it will be as a writer of diaries and not as a facer of firing-squads.

I spent ten minutes yesterday afternoon gazing in the window of Hawes and Curtis's shop in Jermyn Street, admiring some new gloves of a shade half-way between primrose and daffodil with a wonderful dusty bloom on them, and regretting that I couldn't buy half a dozen pairs, or even one pair. But I was compensated by the recollection of Claude Vignon and his famous *gants jaunes*. And I realised with an almost physical intensity of realisation that Balzac's world is one which Hitler cannot touch. I was

profoundly impressed at the end of the last war by the alacrity with which writers of all sorts dropped a subject which had become tedious, how quickly war books and war plays and war films went out of fashion. I believe that, whichever way this war ends, the moment it is over it will be the last thing anybody will want to read about. Do I seriously mean that the re-opening of the Proms next week is of greater interest than, say, what Stalin is or is not going to do? The answer is yes. Not now. Perhaps not while this Diary is writing. But in twenty years certainly. In a hundred years, when my big toe began to ache and when it stopped aching will be of more interest to anybody coming fresh to this Diary than the Peace Terms. It will be news; they will be merely history.

July 29 Monday. There was a grain of truth in my old joke that Vladimir Cernikoff was a great Russian pianist who was neither a Russian nor a great pianist. Actually he was a French Jew born at Geneva; he once told me that he had never been to Russia and did not speak a word of the language. Nobody took him seriously as a performer; I never heard of Cerny playing with the orchestra, and his occasional recitals were only made possible by rich and titled patronesses buying blocks of stalls to which they sent their maids. But then, part of the social history of our time is concerned with the means of keeping Cerny out of the workhouse. There was some story of a wine-business, but it was not this which in his young days maintained him in luxury on the Riviera, lodged in grand-ducal villas and waited on by supercilious flunkeys. After 1918 came *la dèche*, or what would have been destitution but for humbler though equally devoted friends. To say that a man hasn't a bob may only mean that he cannot afford to drink champagne more than twice a week. Cerny died, as he had lived since the last war, without a shilling. But then there was always some restaurant-keeper to stand by him. One such, in Soho, wept on hearing of his death.

"What about the money he owed you?" he was asked.

"Never mind about the money," sobbed the restaurateur. "Monsieur Cernikoff, 'e was a gr-r-eat gentleman!" Cerny was more than that; he was a courtier who had a genius for getting himself courted.

Six feet odd tall, with a bulk like Daniel Lambert's, he looked a little like Nikita Balieff and a great deal like Oscar Wilde. He had a round, moon-like face, a never-ending fund of natural, childish gaiety, a complete absence of malice—I never heard him say an unkind word about anybody—and a magnificent manner. In his bow were all the Russias and all the Czars. A superb bridge-player, he hated being paid to-day with the cheque he gave you yesterday! Two little things come to mind now that he is dead. One was hearing Archy Rosenthal, at a party at Betty Ricketts's house, give an imitation of Cerny playing Mendelssohn's *Rondo Capriccioso* with every note doubled owing to the size of those giant fingers. Cerny, who was not expected, walked in and said, "My boy, you are playing very badly!" The other thing I remember was being driven down to the New Forest by Cerny in the Rolls some woman had lent him. We talked about Sarah Bernhardt, and he became so moved that he stopped the car and walked by himself a little in the autumn woods. Cernikoff had the soul of an artist, and on the morning I heard of his death I put on the gramophone my record of Schubert's *Wanderer Fantasia*, the slow movement of which he used to play more touchingly than anybody I have ever heard.

Aug. 4 Sunday. When doctors differ, etc. Apropos of egotism Goethe observes to Eckermann that "Once this is aroused, every infirmity of character appears." Whereas Desmond MacCarthy has this: "One condition, no doubt, of literary survival is to be unlike, in strength and weakness, other authors; a second is to bloom extravagantly after one's own manner."

I am for Desmond.

Aug. 5 Monday. My neighbours over the way have lost their ginger cat. Which reminds me of Sir Daniel Ridgeley in Pinero's *His House in Order*: "A cat, yes, I like to watch a cat, occasionally." That is the whole point about a cat; you cannot do more than watch it. You cannot make a friend of a cat, because cats know nothing of gratitude or sympathy or compassion or any kind of interest except self-

interest. Their disdain of man is so great that it excludes contempt. We like dogs because they are, we say, "so human." Which is tantamount to praising a dog for being non-doggy! Whereas we recognise that a cat fulfils itself by remaining completely catty. A mysterious dog would be an abomination; a mysterious cat is right.

Aug. 6 Came home very late, but before going to bed
Tuesday. took up Charles Mathews's memoirs and was, as always, held by them. They are full of delightful things. Pestered by people asking him if he had known Garrick, he would reply that he remembered his father, who kept a bookshop, relating how Hannah More had brought the great actor as a customer. Mathews was said as a boy to recite to old Macklin, who was then well over a hundred! After discoursing to the child, at length and with some ill-temper, on the requisites for a great player, Macklin came to the last essential quality—that of discrimination. "Sir, in the course of a long life," said the old man, "I never knew more than three actors who possessed discrimination. David Garrick was one—I, Charles Macklin, another—and the third was—a-a-a—" Here his voice sank, as if step by step, till it reached a landing-place, where it was stationary and mute for some seconds. He then added, "I forget who was the other!"

Another thing that always pleases me in these rich volumes is the account of Mrs Siddons's farewell to Leeds: "On the dropping of the curtain at the close of her last night's performance, she clasped her hands in thankfulness, ejaculating in her most tragic tones, 'Farewell, ye brutes! and for ever, I trust; ye shall never torture me again, be assured!'"

Aug. 8 From Brother Edward:
Thursday.

In York there are some evacuees from Durham. Though provided with knife, fork, and spoon, they insist on eating everything with their fingers. Further, they refuse to sleep *in* a bed. They will sleep *under* it, or anywhere else on the floor; but beds, they say, are for dead people—they aren't going to be laid out yet!

Aug. 10 Lord's. British Empire XI v. London Counties
 Saturday. XI. A brilliant century by L. P. Parslow, of
 Chingford, who has made over a hundred centuries
 in club cricket. And then half an hour of a lump in the throat
 watching Woolley coming out of his retirement to remind us of
 those off-drives at which "the softest splendour falls over the
 field." Neville Cardus's phrase, of course. Perhaps Frank
 shouldn't have re-emerged, even if he did make thirty-eight.
 It was like waving good-bye to somebody for ever, and then
 seeing the train put back to the platform.

My admiration for Cardus grows and grows :

Woolley's cricket has no bastions ; it is poised precariously
 —at any rate, that is how the rational mind perceives it. But,
 for that matter, all the loveliness of the world seems no more
 lasting than the dew on the grass, seems no more than the
 perfume and suppli-ance of a minute. Yet the miracle of
 renewal goes on, and all the east winds of the world may blow
 in vain. So with Woolley's cricket ; the lease of it is in the
 hands of the special providence looking after the things which
 will not look after themselves.

The urge behind this diary is something more than egotism.
 It is the desire to take up certain leases. N. C.'s prose will
 look after itself, but there remain Brother Edward's letters,
 uncultured Montague, the quiddity of Gemmell, the charm of
 humble friends. If this diary lives, then something of these
 lives.

Aug. 11 Fifty years ago a famous critic wrote about a boy
 Sunday. pianist that he "went at the Waldstein sonata like a
 young avalanche, *fortissimo sempre crescendo e prestis-
 simo sempre accelerando*, keeping his feet cleverly over the
 straightforward bits, staggering gamely through the syncopated
 passages, going head-over-heels up and down the flights of
 octaves, and finishing, flushed but unbeaten, after a record-
 breaking neck-or-nothing 'reading' that would have made
 Rubinstein gasp and Madame Schumann faint." The boy was
 my old friend Leo Pavia, who called on me to-day carrying
 under his arm an unwieldy newspaper-cutting book which he
 had lugged all the way from West Kensington. "Nobody ever
 wrote like this about you, James," he said with what Mrs Henry

Wood would have described as a ring of scorn. I opened the book and I read :

Glasgow Herald. Master Pavia's first recital, it will be recollected, clashed with the production of Dr Parry's *L'Allegro* at the Norwich Festival, and it passed almost unnoticed. Not much, however, was lost, for it was obvious that Master Pavia was not a prodigy.

Saturday Review. It is impossible to commend the discretion of whoever was answerable for the public appearance of Master Pavia at two Recitals given at St James's Hall. He is stated to be of English birth and education, and if this is the case, so far as the latter is concerned, it is no matter for congratulation.

Daily Telegraph. Master Pavia's playing is so wanting in accent and rhythm that the music may be compared to the vague babbling of a brook.

Topical Times. Master Pavia gave his second Pianoforte Recital on Wednesday. The audience, consisting mostly of ladies, seemed well pleased with his efforts. That Master Pavia more than once touched a wrong note may be due to the dim light of a November afternoon. He would, however, lose nothing by attending Mons. Paderewski's recital next Wednesday.

And lots more in the same strain. But that is Leo all over. There is a Puck-like and almost monkeyish quality in him—Carel Weight has seized on this in his picture—which makes him adore discomfiture, including his own. Where other people would blench with shame he flushes with pride. A victim to insuperable nervousness, he exchanged the concert platform for the *salon*, where his fine musicianship has given immense delight. In the matter of musical knowledge he is a walking Grove, and without batting an eyelid will tell you the date of the first performance of *Don Pasquale*, or reel off the complete works of Méhul, Cherubini, and Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach. If there were such things as professional wits, Leo would be easily in the first flight. No nonsense about his shafts not leaving a barb behind ; they are meant to sting and do. Add that he is an unconquerable artist who has wrested more from failure than most people get out of success. If I were to compose his epitaph I should write : “ Here lie the Remains of Him who never did an Unkind Thing or said a Kind One.”

Aug. 12 Logan Pearsall Smith has this about Shakespeare's *Monday*. Sonnets: "The business of proving and re-proving, and proving over again—and then proving still once more, just to be absolutely certain—that our Shakespeare cannot possibly mean what he so frankly tells us, has become almost a national industry." This finds an echo in the current attitude to the author of *A Shropshire Lad*, where the proclaimed determination to get to the root of Housman's melancholy is equalled only by the resolve not to recognise the root when it is found. I have just been reading Percy Withers's *A Buried Life*. "We shall never know the truth," writes Withers, and after dismissing "a youthful infatuation of which the family had full cognisance at the time" attempts to assign the cause of the famous melancholy to another lady whom the poet, in his own words, "had loved and revered from youth." In the preface to *Last Poems* we read:

I can no longer expect to be revisited by the continuous excitement under which in the early months of 1895 I wrote the greater part of my other book, nor indeed could I well sustain it if it came. . . .

But in 1895 Housman who was born in 1859, was thirty-six, and the cause of the "continuous excitement" of the early months of '95 can hardly have been the lady whom the poet had been loving and revering for years. This vital preface to *Last Poems* seems to have been seriously regretted. In an autobiographical note found after his death Housman wrote:

I did not begin to write poetry in earnest until the really emotional part of my life was over; and my poetry, so far as I could make out, sprang chiefly from physical conditions, such as a relaxed throat during my most prolific period, the first five months of 1895.

This is singularly unconvincing. Yet the editor of *The Collected Poems* evidently preferred this lame afterthought to the admission in *Last Poems*. This admission, and the preface containing it, do not appear in the new and final edition of the poems. But is it not obvious to anybody who wants to find what he is looking for that the clue to the mystery is what happened—or, if you like, what was renounced—in the early months of 1895? I find it ludicrous to regard the repetition of the word "lad" sixty-

eight times in sixty-three lyrics as evidence of a passion for a lass. Why the suppression of the earlier preface? Podsnappery, Pecksniffery, and Chadbandery, of course. What is Terewth? The terewth about *A Shropshire Lad* is the British public's persistent refusal to believe that its sum can possibly contain a whisper of the thing that every line of it shouts from Clee to Clun.

Aug. 14 A pathetic letter from A. J. A. Symons, the
Wednesday. beautiful handwriting distorted and shaky.

Brick House
Finchingfield
Essex

August 13, 1940

AMI EGOMET,

So our children are to be united in typographical books of ink and paper; your Miss Mitford, my Mr Theodore Hook.¹ Did you know? It adds greatly to my pleasure in my fostering to know that he is to pass his days in such good company. The banns are up; and the marriage, I hear, is for September. We must celebrate the union. I hope Theodore's lack of virtue won't abash poor Mary. Yours is the essay I shall turn to first, when the nuptial volume reaches me; and I expect to chuckle in friendly envy at the good manners of your offspring.

I hear, too, that *Ego* 4 is in the press; and I shall look eagerly in its pages to learn how you have comported yourself in these restricted days. For me, as perhaps you have heard, last November brought what seemed likely to be a total eclipse. Speech, sight, power of motion, power of swallowing, all left me. I was no longer able to sign cheques or to absorb my spittle. Harley Street washed its hands of me, and now that I am all but recovered, accuses me of encephalitis. I remain calm and poor. Luckily I have enough wine in my cellar to last a year or more; when my bins are empty, I shall volunteer for war work in the hope of replenishing them.

Please salute Jock for me; I still hope that some day I shall greet you here, in time to enjoy my last magnum. This is now a defence area, but they would surely allow us to colloque over the problems of the near East or the far West.

Yours ever,
A. J.

¹ This refers to Leonard Russell's symposium on English Wits, to which Symons and I each contributed an essay.



Photo H. Jancowski

The Author at Twenty-four



My Brother Edward at Nineteen

1940]

EGO 5

Aug. 15 Poem sent me by a *Daily Express* reader :
Thursday.

What do I bring from market to-day ?
A rose for my love,
A turtle dove,
And a pound of washing soda.

What do I bring to my love to-day ?
A posy to hold,
A thought of pure gold,
And a cure for chilblains.

Aug. 16 A letter.
Friday.

DEAR MR AGATE,

I disagree with you on the point that a dog ought to be kept in its proper place. The proper place is its basket or kennel, and if it sits there quietly all the time, what is the use of it ?

Yours sincerely
PAMELA (aged 8)

Aug. 17 The one thing I admire about the highbrows is
Saturday. their complete immunity from humour. Being very busy I have only now looked into a book entitled *I Have Seen Monsters and Angels*, published in Paris some months ago, and described as "a multi-lingual autobiography of the night-mind." I open the book at random and I read :

The Moorlunes prastilane the palla. It is chaosmusic and moola. The gallers flick and flake. A hastingrale mustires the bloobissay. Polemears rise ginstersheening in relathings. All the ballarales blick the glistaboon, and rooldee-graster blinks into the hoalara.

The gnostiranes gilfill the blist. The calagremes moocry. It is a pettigrane and tuttilune. The prillvirone now gastucates the allas. Briscalavenes fillroon. A mull mustles the tury. The gubble loves the lug. Birooms bill the bellocity of the timtide. Boost comes the gaw.

I see no difference between this and Earwicker-Joyce's depiction of the madness of Swift :

Unslow, malswift, pro mean, proh noblesse, Atrahore, melancolores, nears ; whose glauque eyes glitt bedimmed to imm ; whose fingrings creep o'er skull : till quench, asterr mist calls estarr and graw, honath Jon raves homes glowcoma.

To be more accurate there is a difference, and it is this: the book published in Paris is nonsense without meaning, whereas *Finnegan's Wake* is capable of elucidation, as the American critic Edmund Wilson has shown. The first is pure waste of time; the second an expense of labour in a waste of tedium.

Aug. 18 Sunday. A knife-edge draught coming through the door into the small of my back—the only breath of air in the entire Queen's Hall—I sit throughout the entire concert in the sweltering heat in my overcoat with the collar turned up, preferring to be taken for a lunatic to the aggravation of a filthy summer cold I have had for a fortnight.

Aug. 21 Wednesday. The A.A. have put their foot on my proposed run round the English Lakes. One doctor had recommended this, another had offered to take me in his car, and Stanley Rubinstein had agreed to lend me £40 of my own money. But the A.A. says no, alleging that we couldn't find our way, that we should be stopped every quarter of a mile, and that our store of petrol would be suspect. So I shall have to take my holiday by guide-book, which is all the easier since I had laid in a brand-new Ward Lock.

Opening this at the enchanting Literary Note I find:

It is not, however, to Wordsworth's poems that we desire to call special attention (they are sufficiently well known), but to his undeservedly neglected prose works.

There follows an extract from the poet's "Miscellaneous Observations" from which I cull this remarkable passage:

A stronger objection is rainy weather, setting in sometimes at this period with a vigour, and continuing with a perseverance, which may remind the disappointed and dejected traveller of those deluges of rain which fall among the Abyssinian mountains for the annual supply of the Nile.

Oh, William, putting your Nile cart before your Abyssinian horse! Rain does *not* fall to supply rivers; rivers exist to dispose of rain!

Perhaps not every reader will notice anything odd about this passage :

In Cumberland and Westmorland let not the comparative weakness of the streams prevent the traveller from sympathising with such impetuosity as they possess ; and, making the most of the present objects, let him, as he may justly do, observe with admiration the unrivalled brilliancy of the water, and the variety of motion, mood, and character that arises out of the want of those resources by which the power of the stream in the Alps is supported.

Well, what's odd about that ? asks the reader. Simply that it is the perfect criticism of Wordsworth's own poetry.

I can place the year of my first visit to the Lakes, because it was from Rosthwaite in Borrowdale that I set out on my first visit to London, as escort to my mother, my father remaining in Manchester till the end of the week. I remember the texture, pattern, and colour of my new suit, a lavender herring-bone cheviot, the feel of my first dress-suit, and the horror of being accosted by a street-walker in Maida Vale, my first experience of the kind. I was eighteen, the year was 1895, and on the Saturday my father arrived and took us to the Haymarket—the first time I had been in a theatre without a pit—to see Beerbohm Tree and Mrs Patrick Campbell in *Fédora*. I remember *Fédora's* death-pallor coming off on Loris Ipanoff's sleeve !

But all that is long ago, and I must begin to recognise that while the fells have for some time been of no use to me except for gazing purposes, and then only with a car, the same will one day soon apply to golf-courses, if, indeed, this has not already happened. Clearing out my attic yesterday in accordance with the new regulations, I came across my bag of clubs—eighteen several and distinct masterpieces. I spent half an hour playing shots on the carpet and doing a first-class “bunth”—Jock's word for self-pity à la Bunthorne ! Lunch-time coming round I desisted, and with much puffing and grunting climbed the hill to Swiss Cottage, taking Ward Lock with me. Over lunch I filled my mind with beautiful stuff like this :

Many tourists desire to pass from Scafell Pike to Scafell. Frankly we do not think it good enough. The northern and eastern faces are not to be thought of, and tho' the northern

face can be turned by a long, arduous and steep scree shot, *Lord's Rake*, the enthusiasm of the individual must decide whether the reward is commensurate with the time and energy expended. No other routes must be attempted. Fatal accidents have occurred on this mountain.

But I *have* passed from Scafell Pike to Scafell, when I was eighteen! Meditating on such things, and the weather being clear, I then attempted and successfully achieved the descent from Swiss Cottage to the Villa Volpone.

Aug. 22 A p.c. from Douglas Furber, to whom I had
Thursday. recommended Sanatogen as a nerve tonic :

DEAR JIMMIE,

Thank you for your most kind and sympathetic letter. I'm very much afraid of nervous breakdowns. The one I had was too bad for words—but our bridge games help a lot and I am very much looking forward to next Sunday. I shall remember Sanatogen. Which sounds like a famous last word.

Ever,
DUGGIE

And Gerald Moore at supper to-night, with reference to the liaison of two famous 'cellists: "She gave him a *vibrato* that it took him ten years to recover from!"

Aug. 23 Am afraid I was rude to H. G. Wells last night. It
Friday. was at the Café Royal and Wells, sitting at a near-by table, shouted in his loudest whisper that he had just come from *The Devil's Disciple*, and how much better it was than any film.

J. A. I don't agree. *North-west Passage* isn't a work of art. But it brings your heart into your mouth and keeps it there.

H. G. Ah, well, I don't know what a work of art is.

J. A. Oh, yes, you do. But never mind that. Why praise one kind of good thing at the expense of another kind of good thing?

H. G. I stand corrected.

Of all critical ineptitudes this criss-crossing infuriates me the most. *The Times* is at it this morning with reference to Thursday's performance of Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben* which I found, as always, immensely exciting. *The Times* critic recognises the excitement but finds a way of running this particular brand of excitement down.

We need not impose on ourselves any self-denying ordinance in regard to Strauss's music because of his goose-step psychology, and this week those who were tired of that sort of thing could save their shillings on Thursday and hear Beethoven's *Eroica* on Friday instead.

Well, there you have it. Strauss's heroics are bad because Beethoven's are good.

Aug. 24 Café Royal. Some Bloomsbury ass braying about Saturday. platonic love, I told him of a letter which appeared in *The Saturday Review* some time in the 'nineties. The writer had overheard this conversation in a Paris café and taken it down :

FIRST COCOTTE. Mon ami me dit qu'il n'a pour moi que de l'amour platonique. Qu'est-ce que c'est que ça ?

SECOND COCOTTE. Je ne sais pas au juste, mais pour moi ça a l'air d'être quelque sale cochonnerie.

I once heard Edgar Jepson wind up a dinner-table discussion on the subject by saying in his dry, precise voice, "I know nothing about platonic love except that it is not to be found in the works of Plato." And I remember Leo saying about two Platonists, "They are always in a state of miserable enthusiasm about each other."

Aug. 25 When I got home last night I found a first copy of Sunday. *Ego* 4. It bulks thin! Jock tries to console me by saying that Beethoven's No. 4 is a small-scope symphony. If this means that *Ego* 8 is my *Eroica* and that *Ego* 5 will be my C minor, all well and good.

Jock has met Michel Saint-Denis, robbed by the Nazis of his son and, he fears, his best friend, Pierre Fresnay, and whose mother is lost somewhere in France. He told Jock that the Germans are reopening the Comédie-Française.

"What with?" "*Les Voleurs!*" replied Saint-Denis. This is a superb *mot*, worthy of Balzac. But alas, Saint-Denis did not say it. When I started *Ego* I made up my mind never to improve or embroider. It was Jock who suggested Schiller's play as the right one in the circumstances.

The news about Fresnay grieves me. His grounding in Molière and de Musset gave him extraordinary poise, and in lighter rôles a smiling, disdainful glitter. He had or could portray breeding, which in certain kinds of films was an actual disservice. I saw him recently in a Jean Gabin part. It was like a racehorse pretending to be a cart-horse and giving itself away by neck and shoulder movements of an elegance that could not be disguised.

Some one has sent me a tiny book of Arnold Bennett's called *Things*. This consists of extracts from a journal kept by A. B. One hundred copies were privately printed in Burslem in 1906. I cull this, which does not appear in the larger journal:

Wednesday, 2nd February, 1898

Ebert, my German tutor, was telling me, as an illustration of the anti-semitic spirit now rampant throughout Germany, that at a certain inn in a large manufacturing town (I forget the name) whenever a person of Jewish appearance entered, his order for a drink was silently answered by the waiter offering him an invitation railway ticket to Jerusalem (single—*aber nicht retour*). He also showed me cartoons and offensive (printed) postcards directed against the Jews, which had all the rancour and crude bitterness of the Middle Ages.

Aug. 26 Hitler's war of nerves is not the modern thing we
Monday. take it to be. A hundred thousand years ago Man
had roaring pouches on each side of his throat,
voice-amplifiers with which he frightened his enemies. The
gorilla still has them.

Aug. 28 An unknown friend, name of George Richards,
Wednesday. sends me this:

BLITZKRIEG

1 A.M.

The moon full white but scarred with all its continents
Pours day-night on the dew-damp carpet of the Chilterns
While birds around prolong
Forlorn bewildered intempestive song.

To left and right
 Wan feeble ineffectual tentacles of searchlight
 Rake the air,
 The vast firmament a music-glass—
 Its brim
 A-tremble and a-hum
 With Nazi wings up there.

This seems to me every bit as good as anything Alfred Douglas ever did. And why is that master-mind silent these days? What about the English sonnet in war-time, and how, escaping from her Nazi following, a British bomber wins to a cloudy space? Perhaps this is not fair to Alfred, who has been out of the business for some time. But why has not one of our working poets seen fit to commemorate the fact that Milton has had his statue blown from its pedestal in Cripplegate, but was otherwise undamaged:

Wordsworth! thou shouldst be living at this hour:
 Milton hath need of thee. . . .

Aug. 29 Tosca at Sadler's Wells to-night strode on looking
Thursday. like Judy Smallweed as Phiz saw her—master-
 fulness in a poke bonnet. Quite charmless,
 whereas what I chiefly remember about Sarah Bernhardt was the exquisite grace and comedy of her church scene. To-night's singer, who was stoutish and French, had to go through the murder scene in baby-blue satin, too tight round the thighs. Both play and opera depend upon Scarpia. In the play the acting must be of de Max's quality; in the opera the performance must be terrifying vocally. Scarpia's voice to-night was just not big enough, which reduced that villain to the dimension of something out of Massenet.

Met Tyrone Guthrie in the interval, and had the sense not to tackle him on the subject of *The Kingdom of God*, the Spanish play about nuns with which, under another name, he is making the Old Vic stump the factories and collieries of Lancashire and Durham. Personally I cannot see that young women with the sap of life running high are performing God's will by immolating themselves. I cannot, and I will not, see that a laburnum-tree is praising God by refusing to blossom. Roman Catholics seem to have no difficulty in believing this. But it would take more than a dozen Popes, arguing in shifts, to convince me.

Aug. 30 Postcard from Brother Edward :
Friday.

(1) "Empty grinning apery of commonplace creatures and their loud inanities ought to be more and more shut out from us as the Eternities draw nigh."

Carlyle

(2) "The finely elaborated execution and the inward perfection of vacancy of Tennyson's *Idylls*."

Ibid.

(3) "It is as though the town-bull had learned to hold a pen."

Carlyle on Whitman

(4) "He sits in a cesspool and adds to it."

Carlyle on Swinburne

(5) "Of the forty miles of shelves in the British Museum, forty feet would contain all the real literature in the world."

Coventry Patmore

Aug. 31 These air-raids are beginning to interfere with the
Saturday. amenities, which is very wrong of them. Bob

Leaver and his wife were to call this morning at nine o'clock to motor me to Bexhill, but we judged it wise to wait for the All Clear at ten. Twenty minutes after leaving Croydon we ran into a second warning and had to shelter. The third happened ten miles from Bexhill but we heard no signal, and it was presumably during this raid that we collected the bit of shrapnel which we afterwards found, still warm, on the floor of the car. It must have come in through the roof or windows, all of which were closed when we sheltered. We spent the afternoon at Warbleton (!), a hamlet high up on the Sussex downs. Cloudless sky, a delicious breeze, and I sat contentedly about while Bob and Audrey gave an eye to April Farm—charming name!—left in their charge by two girl-owners now in America. Among the stock were two rather clumsy riding-ponies. But this was the first time I had seen horses—horses in a field, I mean—since the war. So I sat and smoked and looked them over as if they had been prize Hackneys. The fourth raid was at tea-time. Five miles from Croydon we had to put in for a slight repair, and I asked the garage-proprietor if he lived near at hand. He said, "Used to!" and pointed across the road, where all that was left of a little villa was the gatepost and

the name, "Figaro." Alas, it was Figaro here and Figaro there, a heap of rubble, a bit of wall, and the burnt-out remains of three motor-cars. The fifth alarm sounded soon after we got back to town, and there were two more before I finally got to sleep after the happiest day for months.

Sept. 1 Sunday. I turn on the wireless and I hear: "It was a great moment when Stanley met Livingstone. But can it have been as momentous as when Bud Flanagan met Chesney Allen?"

Sept. 2 Monday. Leo Pavia presented me with a hat-brush with the date 1845 dyed into the bristles. This was given to his grandmother by Rossini.

Sept. 3 Tuesday. Letter from accountants saying I have now paid off all income-tax arrears for 1939 (see *Ego* 4, p. 97) and have started on 1940. Have I forgotten that in four months' time the tax for 1941 will be due? No, I have not forgotten. I devote an hour a day to worrying how I am to cope with the increased tax, plus arrears, plus the moneylenders, plus the Bank, plus the upkeep of a stud of horses which is now of no value—as long as I have the power to prevent it Ego shall not draw a cart—plus a reduced income. All this reinforces a notion I have had for some time—that Sisyphus was an amateur.

Sept. 4 Wednesday. I am about to enter on what may prove to be an interesting experiment. Not feeling too happy about the top floor, I have descended for sleeping purposes to the study. This was my bedroom when I first came to Villa Volpone. And then things began to happen. About six o'clock one Sunday evening Julian Phillipson and I were sitting working in the drawing-room adjoining, with the door open, when we both heard somebody come down the stairs. We looked up from our work knowing there was nobody else in the house and said simultaneously, "Who's that?" We went into the hall and found nobody. We agreed that the stairs must have creaked, and in creaking made a noise like somebody

descending. A few evenings later some friends were leaving about one in the morning when we *all* heard the front door open of itself; going into the hall we found the door open. Very well then, the latch was a loose one, and somebody had failed to shut the door properly. Waiting up for me one night Fred Leigh "could have sworn" he saw "something" in the hall. He went to meet "it" and "it" vanished. Obviously Fred's nerves! On another occasion in the hall I saw a shadow come between me and the light with nothing to cause it. I put that down to indigestion, which is always playing tricks with my eyes. Next I started to hear footsteps, lots of them, in the hall. When I opened the door, nobody. All right, I had been dreaming. Next I felt a tug at my arm. Imagination! Finally, I had gone to bed and was just dropping off to sleep when I heard two tremendous blows on the floor immediately over my head, like the *coups* of the *régisseur* in a French theatre. A search upstairs revealed nothing. This scared me, and I decided that something didn't like my sleeping downstairs. So I chose a room upstairs for my bedroom, and the same night fancied I felt a friendly, approving squeeze on my arm. Imagination again. But no further manifestations! During all this time there was nobody in the house except Fred and me. If there are any odd happenings now that I have come downstairs again, I shall record them here.

Sept. 5 *Ego 4* published.
Thursday.

Sept. 6 Arts Theatre to see Jean Cocteau's version of the
Friday. *Œdipus* legend. First three acts witty, after which the play peters out in a 'straight' version of the Sophoclean tragedy. Much too long. Peter Glenville, who appeared to have treated his torso with Cherry Blossom boot polish, made a handsome *Œdipus*, and Jeanne de Casalis was pretty good as a sort of Beatrice Lillie *Jocasta*. But neither could look at the fourth act.

Sept. 7 Lunch at Lord's with Alfred Chenhalls, and had
Saturday. long discussion on how we are going to get Henry Wood the O.M.

The biggest air attack launched on London to date started at 5.30 this afternoon and has been going on ever since, the time of writing being 2 A.M. From the roof of the Café Royal got a fine view of the blaze, the Tower Bridge being cut out like fretwork. In one corner of the foreground a large flag fluttered, making the whole thing look like one of those old posters of *A Royal Divorce*, Napoleon's cavalry against a background of red ruin.

Sept. 8 Ivor Brown in the *Observer* has a generous but also
Sunday. extremely odd review of *Ego 4*: "The great diarists
 have either been or known the statesmen, the men
 of affairs, and the chief shapers of their period." Again:
 "Mr Agate knows perfectly well that the fiddlers and painters
 and mummerys are not, for all their virtuosity, one half as
 important in the eye of eternity as they think they are." What
 this means is that the artists are unimportant in the eye and
 ear of Ivor Brown. "If Mr Agate wishes to be remembered as a
 great diarist, he must seriously consider meeting some new
 people and finding out about a larger society." But I am not
 interested in greatness or littleness. I am of my own stature,
 and that suffices. Ivor hopes the author of *Ego 5* will see more
 of the Athenæum and occupy a pew in the Press Gallery in the
 House of Commons. "The Bench of Bishops, too, might merit
 his observation." And why do I bother about Cora Pearl when,
 in exactly the same period, there is John Stuart Mill? Because,
 dear Ivor, this is my diary and not yours.

I see that my old friend has just headed a letter to the Press
 protesting against the British policy of placating Japan by
 closing the Burma road to China, the other signatories being
 Margery Fry, H. J. Fleure, A. G. Gardiner, M. L. Jacks, A. D.
 Lindsay, J. W. Robertson Scott, Sybil Thorndike, H. G. Wells,
 and Helen Wodehouse. I wasn't asked to sign, and I shouldn't
 have signed it if I had been asked, not because I don't agree
 with the signatories but because, unlike them, I am not *au fait*
 with the degree of tension in our relations with Japan, and
 whether we can afford to have that nation added to our enemies.
 But I do know about the state of tension among the English
 colony in Paris when Cora insisted on flying the Union Jack
 over her hotel, and the British Ambassador, on being appealed

to, shrugged his shoulders. Now I hold that in the scale of the preposterous, the picturesque, and the Paphian—which is what interests me—Cora Pearl is a better subject than the Chairman of the Board of Trade or the President of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries. But then I am not serious-minded in the sense that Ivor is. I look upon Beethoven as being a world of his own, and not as a mere decoration of this one. I set Renoir, Manet, and Toulouse-Lautrec over any Chancellor, Home Secretary, or Chairman of Committee. I lose my head over Rachel, Bernhardt, and the like; Ivor keeps his over municipal theatres and feeding Tchchov to the masses. Note the shade of contempt in his “*fiddlers* and painters and *mummers*.” Why is not the middle word *daubers*? Because your intellectual, while dead to music and acting, which are temperamental arts requiring to be interpreted emotionally, is alive to painting, which is something he can see and size up. There is no “give” in Ivor’s mind, and no “slack” in his make-up. His brain is an instrument of precision; mine is not. The Bergner put it over the critics good and plenty, and I do not remember that Ivor protested. Why should he protest? There is no apparatus to prove that an actress is not great. My divining-rod just took one look and said NO.

Sept. 9 Sixty-three to-day. The faithful Jock presents me
Monday. with one of those gilt-encrusted stage-characters—
 “spanglers” I call them—which were just going out
of fashion a hundred years ago. It is Malibran in *The Maid of Artois*.

Sept. 12 Brother Edward writes that he received *Ego 4* in
Thursday. the middle of a painful bout of intestinal colic.
 “I at once dropped a volume of Wordsworth,
whose healing power upon the colon I was testing.” He goes
on :

You have continued to spoil the frontispiece by that pointless perversity which is the despair of every tasteful mind. It would have been excellent but for those unspeakable spectacles which, henceforth, will for ever be at a loss what to do—seek to maintain their perilous poise, descend with a thud upon

your unexpectant nose, or, at the first prick of an ear, simply fall off. *When you are not eating, do you wear your dentures on your chin?* Your second photo transcends the boundaries of freakdom—it is an offence, grotesque, cretinous, *scabreux*.

The comments on the book itself are on the whole disappointingly kind.

Sept. 14 Brother Edward again:
Saturday.

York

September 13, '40

I am the crux of page 53 and the fact is not duly indexed. For this omission, I proceed to drop my delayed bomb.

P. 248. *Booz Endormi*.

You seem to think that translating poetry is a form of cab-washing. It is not. "And Ruth did ask." You don't get the force of the French reflexive *se demandait*; besides the "did" is obviously a make-weight. Similarly, "rapt," which does not appear in the original.

Sous ses voiles. This phrase refers to the garments of Ruth, not to her eyes. I don't like the false rhyme "veiled" and "field." "All unflown" does not give the force of the French *éternel*. And you must not put "negligently" down for *négligemment*. Finally, from the point of view of the versificatory rules of the iambic pentameter, I doubt whether your "Motionless, rapt . . ." line is allowable.

As for your original poetry. This is not cab-washing—it's lorry-driving. Unequal, unbalanced, pointless, bumpety, ramrod, helter-skelter, sprawling. But that sort of thing is typical of your whole crew. Self-sufficient, jealous, mean-minded, affected, superficial, snobbish, bumptious, false, ignorant, servile, double-dealing and—impotent. And there are people ready to spend eighteen shillings to listen to your cage-twitterings!

By God, Heine was right! Monkeys have as fully the capacity of speech as men. But, pained and distressed at the vacuity of human utterance, the Führer of Monkeydom once published a decree forbidding all further converse among monkeys till the end of time, under penalty of losing their tails. *So wurde die Sprache auf ewig verboten*. And thus it is that, to-day, in the Zoos and the Tiergartens of the world you will see monkeys with full-flowing tails, monkeys with mutilated and diminished tails, and monkeys with hardly the stump of a

tail. Those are the wise-obedient, the fractious-indiscreet and the downright revolutionary.

"If you're intelligent you're crackers," says my Yorkian landlady. Crackers? So be it. In the historical, philosophical, religious, biographical, topographical, romantic, poetic, and dramatic literatures of France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Russia, Poland, Greece, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Belgium, and Holland, there is no author of repute I cannot place and whose chief work or works I cannot very likely mention. I will tell you *something* about him, as I can tell you roughly what is on the shelves of the Reading Room in the British Museum. "Know thyself," we are enjoined. I do; and as Macaulay felt he was called upon to learn German if only to make fun of German literature, so I feel myself called upon to twist the tails of some of you less than monkeys; and I'm doing it!

But, during the last thirty years, whenever I—this poor remnant of humanity, this fluttering scarecrow draped on a couple of peasticks—have opened a wry mouth to make a literary pronouncement, my intended listeners have turned away to dust the mantelpiece.

THE MANTELPIECE !!!

Oh, mice in Africa!

E. A.

Sept. 15 The *S.T.* has a two-column review by Rebecca Sunday. West:

10 Fairfax Road, N.W.6

Sept. 15, '40

DEAR REBECCA,

It is the pure critic in you which has perceived "the sense of doom beating behind the frivolity of *Ego* 4 like a majestic theme in the bass." If I had to make out a case for my Diary it would be the fight it puts up against the doom of all things, including its author. Dear Rebecca, grant me the sense not only to know my Micawberishness, but to have played it up to the full for the same reason that made the young G.B.S. stand on his head. If I had whittled down my absurdities no publisher would have looked at *Ego*. On the other hand I have not invented or heightened; the truth seemed to me to be fantastic enough.

And now comes a fine point which I feel you will appreciate. You ask why, when I was in Paris, I gave a few lines only to that great artist, Georges Pitoëff, and a page to Beaverbrook.

Why did I not re-create that lovely production of *The Seagull* ? Because, my dear girl, I was and am writing a *diary*, and my diary has one rule : Never embellish ! A week-end rush is not the time for an essay in dramatic criticism ; anything of the sort inserted later would be a falsification and would read like one. If some day I am confined to the house by illness or fog and it occurs to me to cogitate about Pitoëff or a walk on Great Gable, why then I set down my cogitations, and that is honest diary.

The sympathetic insight of your review as a whole almost tempts me to break the rule forbidding thank-you's. But I am firm, and you will understand.

Always your devoted
JAMES

Sept. 17 E. C. Bentley, the inventor of the Clerihew, review-
Tuesday. ing *Ego* 4, hints that it is about people who don't matter. I woke up this morning murmuring :

Mr Bentley

Said evidently

Whoever thinks Balzac, Beethoven, Benson, Bernhardt, Daudet, Duse, Flaubert, Ibsen, Maupassant, Meyerbeer, Montague, Wagner, Walkley, Wilde, and Zola among the dead, and, among the quick, Beaverbrook, Beerbohm, Cochran, Coward, Gielgud, Hambourg, Horowitz, Isherwood, Loughton, MacCarthy, Moiseiwitsch, Newman, Rachmaninoff, Sayers, Shaw, Sibelius, Stein, Tempest, Thorndike, Walpole, Wood, Zuloaga, and lots more matter

Is as mad as a hatter.

The *Daily Telegraph*, in which Bentley's review appeared, declined to print this modest little quip. Excuse—lack of space.

Sept. 18 How apt Dickens is to anything and everything
Wednesday. that turns up. The Government having made a general issue of ear-plugs, I at once think of Betsey Trotwood with her magazine of jewellers' cotton. " ' Some local irritation, ma'am ? ' asked Mr Chillip. ' Nonsense,' replied my aunt, and corked herself again." When anybody says to me " That's a bomb ! " I shall say " Nonsense," and cork myself again.

Sept. 19 Life in the dug-out proceeds as follows : Descend
Thursday. at 8 P.M. when the sirens go, rummy till midnight with Fred, Charlie, and anybody who happens literally to drop in, then sandwiches, then more rummy till

2 A.M., after which we catch as much sleep as we can. Jolly but crowded. Hamlet, when he counted himself a king of infinite space, reckoned on a nutshell to himself, not one among three or more.

"Things move violently *to* their place and calmly *in* their place," said Bacon. Provided, I submit, they have places to move to. Have decided to run away, a justifiable cowardice since I can do nine-tenths of my work as well outside London as in it. But where? I hear that there isn't a bed to be had in the Home Counties, and that at Oxford, for example, people are going from house to house asking to be allowed to sleep on the floor. Reactions to the notion of even temporary flight are odd. Leo Pavia, to whom I proposed ten days or a fortnight in Somerset or Devon, where the hotels are still advertising accommodation, flatly refused to budge, saying he couldn't bear to think what might happen to his house in his absence. I said I couldn't bear to think what might happen to mine in my presence. Finally, he said he wasn't in a holiday mood and shouldn't enjoy it.

I was cogitating about all this when the 'phone rang. It was Stanley Rubinstein asking if I would like ten days at his cottage in the Cotswolds; as he and the family have to stay in London the cottage is *as a matter of course* at the disposal of his friends. All Stanley's character is in those italics. He and José Levy are two of the biggest-hearted men I have known—both Jews, be it noted. Stanley said I should find two or three more lots of guests and we must sort ourselves out. Dispatching Fred Leigh to Wales, where his family is, and taking Charlie to look after me, I arrived at Cheltenham some time after midnight.

Sept. 21 Slept till noon and after breakfast took my
Saturday. bearings. A bus, two miles away, goes to Cheltenham every three hours, while there is similar communication with Gloucester and Tewkesbury. But there are bicycles, and a half-broken saddle-horse which the girls insist on riding and I won't. The elder is a great beauty who devastates aerodromes *à la* Zuleika Dobson, the younger is a tom-boy and promises fun. The house is half-timber. Lovely garden and orchard, huge wooden cider-press with a wooden

screw ten and a half inches in diameter. Planes from the neighbouring airfield overhead all day long, and last night they laid a smoke-screen to make up for the balloon barrage blown away by last week's high wind. It seems that eleven bombs were dropped near the cottage ten days ago, and I point out to Charlie that this is better than one bomb dropped on Swiss Cottage ten minutes ago.

If "renovation" means two bath-rooms, which it does in this case, an old-world village should mean two pubs, which it doesn't. One hamlet one pub is the rule here. At the King's Head at Norton I saw a model letter-box in which Fred Archer deposited his letters to be retrieved and posted by his valet. This unique object was purchased at the sale of Archer's effects by Matt Dawson, the trainer, and given by him to Lord Falmouth, who left it in his will to the father of the present landlord, late huntsman to the Cotswold. On the wall was an excellent twelve-by-ten-inch oil-painting of a huntsman punishing a hound, the horse being done with immense vigour. The landlord, name of George Traviss, said the picture was reproduced in a book which he presently dug out of a cupboard and showed me, John Mills's *The Life of a Fowhound*, published in 1848, where the name of the artist was given as A. Cooper, R.A. "I've never read the book myself. Knowing as much as I do about the subjick, them sort of books 'as no interest for me." The man has had an eventful career. Spent some time in the States and was in charge of kennels at Mount Rose within a mile of the spot where the Lindbergh baby was found, and was on duty on the day of the kidnapping. But the peak achievement of his career, he said, was teaching Clark Gable, Mary Pickford, and Ginger Rogers to play polo. At the Swan at Coombe Hill, next call on the first cycle ride I have had for roughly forty years, I found two interesting prints. In one, a monster, half ape and half cave-man, is depicted as Hamlet confronting the Ghost. This has the inscription: *Dedicated to Amateurs and Private Performers*. The other shows John Bull on the cliffs of Dover, straddle-legged, with his hands behind him and blowing clouds of smoke from his pipe. Viewing the preparations for invasion on the French coast he is saying, "You may all be D——d!!" The print is dated Oct. 18, 1808, and the publisher is W. Holland, 11 Cockspur Street.

Sept. 22 First signs of war strain ? "Tired of being bombed
Sunday. at the Dorchester I transferred to Claridge's."
Correspondent in Sunday paper.

Sept. 25 Spent Monday and Tuesday getting off articles for
Wednesday. *John o' London's, Sunday Times, and Daily*
Express, three days before they are due, to allow
for postal delay. Also a score of letters. The idea is to get
some place within fifty miles of London and release Fairfax
Road, with its fairly safe dug-out, for George Mathew or some-
body whose work keeps him in London. Not too happy about
sheltering here, where we hear almost nothing of the war. An
enemy plane came over last night and dropped a parachute
flare. But that has been all except a little gentlemanly popping
of guns some miles away.

Sept. 26 To enter Tewkesbury Abbey is to be pitchforked
Thursday. into the thick of English and Shakespearean
history. Richard Neville and Anne Beauchamp
had two daughters, Isabel and Anne. Anne, the younger
daughter, first married to the boy Prince of Wales, was, as we
know, woo'd and won by Gloucester. The elder daughter,
Isabel, in 1469 became the wife of George, Duke of Clarence, of
whom since boyhood I have always held a wholly wrong view.
This for several reasons. The beauty of the name, the exquisite
alliteration of "false" and "fleeting," and the fact that when
I first saw the play with Benson the part was played by Frank
Rodney, a schoolboy's image of manly grace and, in the golden
wig and purple doublet and hose he used for Clarence, irresistible
—all these things transfigured the mean fellow beyond recogni-
tion. In addition Rodney was a thumping good actor, and he
delivered the Dream speech better than anybody I ever heard.

Which brings me to to-day's great thrill. "Would you like
to see Clarence's bones ?" asked Canon E. P. Gough, the Vicar
of Tewkesbury, who was showing me round. A grid behind the
High Altar was then raised, we descended half a dozen steps,
and there in a dark hole some four feet above the floor—in the
winter water floods the vault to the height of three feet—in an
airtight glass case, huddled together anyhow, were the skulls
and bones of Clarence and his wife. It seems that after the

legendary incident of the Malmsey butt, or whatever was the cause of death, Clarence's body was brought in state to Tewkesbury, where the funeral ceremonies lasted thirty-five days. And there, hugger-mugger, lies he whom Shakespeare made to say :

... then came wandering by
A shadow like an angel, with bright hair
Dabbled in blood ; and he squeak'd out aloud
" Clarence is come ; false, fleeting, perjured Clarence,
That stabb'd me in the field by Tewksbury."

I stopped for lunch at the Hop Pole in the town and copied out the inscription over the door, which wrenched me back to the modern world, at least as far as Dickens.

They stopped to dine, upon which occasion there was more Bottled Ale, with some more Madeira and some port besides, and here the Case Bottle was replenished for the fourth time. Under the influence of the combined stimulants, Mr Pickwick and Mr Ben Allen fell fast asleep for thirty miles while Bob and Mr Weller sang duets in the dickey.

We were a jolly party of four at lunch. The Canon and a retired bank manager called Stordy, who motored me over—he looks and talks like Galsworthy except that he can see a joke and make one—the third being the delightful fellow, a close friend of the Canon, who some years ago sent me out of the blue an old print of my ancestor, Shuter the actor, which hangs over my bed at the Villa Volpone. The Canon, by the way, is restoring the Abbey hand over fist—*i.e.* removing and washing off the mistakes of former renovators. Everybody here says he ought to be a bishop.

Sept. 28 Letter from Alfred Douglas, beginning "Devour-
Saturday. ing time that blunts the lion's paws has slightly
modified my feelings of dislike towards you."

Sept. 29 Stanley and Vera, who arrived on Friday night,
Sunday. brought with them Stanley's aunt, aged seventy-two.
Item, the latter's sister-in-law aged eighty-seven.
Item, the latter's daughter, a charming lady who has been
German, Swiss, and Polish by turns, is now without nationality,
and has two sons in the South African Army. Item, a German
refugee, a very clever girl, highly educated. This increases

Stanley's likeness to Traddles ; and he clinches the resemblance by saying of the first two, " They are the dearest old girls."

Joined at lunch to-day by Anthony Rubinstein, at school at Cheltenham and getting on for sixteen, and his friend Sambo—otherwise Rowland Smith. Also a Captain Byrne, a retired Gold Coast Governor, who once shot two man-eating lions in one and the same twenty minutes and to-day terrifies us with a tale of mysterious things called spiders' webs dropped in the fields by Germans. I suggest that they are impregnated with the virus of foot-and-mouth disease, which suggestion is to be forwarded to the proper authorities.

After tea Stanley took me on a tour of the demesne. The village is in Domesday Book, the house is said to be the oldest in the village, a contention borne out by the herring-bone Saxon wall with two cat holes. In the east wall Stanley has preserved under glass part of the original wattle and daub. When the four or five Victorian wallpapers had been stripped off and the kitchen grate pulled out, an old-fashioned fireplace came to light with huge bread and meat ovens on each side of it. In one of these was found a child's Elizabethan shoe. A treasure of a later date is Queen Victoria's Wheeling Chair, which found its way to Cyder Press Farm via Windsor Castle, Middlesex Hospital, and the Caledonian Market, a pedigree vouched for by a dealer well known to my host. As I was a little sceptical, my hostess produced the glazed chintz cover with the royal marking.

Sept. 30 Bertie van Thal's friend, John Byron the actor,
Monday. having found me rooms at Oxford, I am now installed where I have always regretted not being educated. This means intermitting the psychic research begun at the Villa Volponé, where nothing had happened up to the time of leaving.

Oct. 1 "My riches consist not in the multitude of my
Tuesday. possessions but in the fewness of my wants." These words, inscribed on the base of some cheese-paring Liberal's statue in Peel Park, Salford, aroused my contempt at the age of nine. My riches consist in a very few but choice possessions without which I should be lost. The photographs

are two little ones of Sarah and Réjane, which have always stood on my mantelpiece and shall continue in their station so long as I have a mantelpiece. The books are: My *Manchester Guardian* cutting book, *The Manchester Stage 1880-1900*, Montague's *Dramatic Values*, Shaw's *Our Theatre in the Nineties*, Max's *Around Theatres*, G. H. Lewcs's *Actors and Acting*, Henry Morley's *The Journal of a London Playgoer 1851-1866*, Charles de Lovenjoul's *Histoires des Œuvres de Balzac*, Cerfberr and Christophe's *Répertoire de la Comédie Humaine*, a little volume entitled *Les Cent Meilleurs Poèmes (Lyriques) de la Langue Française*, Geoffrey Bennett's *Famous Harness Horses*, Shakespeare, and Boswell's *Johnson*. The train to Oxford yesterday being crowded, I sat in the corridor on the suitcase containing these treasures and thought of Betsey Trotwood's question to David: "Why do you think I prefer to sit upon this property of mine to-night?" David didn't know. "'Because,' said my aunt, 'it's all I have.'"

Oct. 8 Matinée of *All's Well that Ends Well* at the Thursday. Vaudeville. This is one of the four Shakespeare - plays which Stevenson, "having made all suitable endeavour," knew that he could never read. Frankly *All's Well* makes me cross. Surely Helena is Shakespeare's most unlikeable heroine:

There shall your master have a thousand loves
A mother and a mistress and a friend . . .

Yes, but can't she see that Bertram doesn't want her as mother, mistress, or friend? That, in Runyonese, he doesn't care for any part of her? My sympathies are entirely with the young man, even though he is an appalling cad. Stevenson talks of D'Artagnan's ungentlemanly and perfectly improbable trick upon Milady. But what about the unladylike and perfectly improbable trick by which the young women in Shakespeare's sourer comedies are always trying to thrust themselves on to somebody who doesn't want them? Shaw dotes on Helena because she is Shakespeare's nearest approach to Ann Whitefield. Catherine Lacey put up a brilliant performance as Helena, giving her eyebrows like the Adelphi Arches and making the rest of her out of the stained glass in Chartres Cathedral.

Bertram, played by Peter Glenville, besides not liking the lady, obviously didn't want to bed her through the additional fear of cutting himself to pieces. One thing I cannot understand. How came this play to be so well known as to make the line about "a bright particular star" a common quotation?

Oct. 4 Oxford is not the hub of modern culture I expected
Friday. to find it. Seeing two ladies vainly exhorting a dog to get into a motor-car, I prodded it with my stick, repeating Cyrano's command to Christian: "Monte donc, animal!" The elder lady gave me a severe look and said, "I think that was most uncalled for."

Oct. 6 Where I am staying no meals are served except
Sunday. breakfast. No afternoon tea, and a complete embargo on bringing in anything for lunch, dinner, or supper. Not even cheese, since in Oxford cheese breeds mice!! Landlady not to be persuaded that this is against the nature of both mice and cheese. Nothing to be washed in bathroom, in spite of the fact that the laundries are full to overflowing and will not take further orders. Have told John Byron that unless he finds me something more accommodating I shall write an article for the *S.T.* on the Oxford Repertory Company's production of *Quiet Wedding* which I am to see to-night, and give him a bad notice for his share in it!!

Oct. 7 John Byron very good to-night. After the show I
Monday got drawn into the arrangements for next week's production of Frank Vosper's *Love from a Stranger*, the management having tried London for an actor for Basil Sydney's part and drawn blank. The only alternative seemed to be getting somebody down from the Aberdeen Repertory Company or changing the play. Whereupon I suggested John, who looks like Basil Sydney and has, I feel, more in him than the light comedy stuff he produced to-night. Christopher Fry, the producer, concurred: it seems that he had already been playing with the idea. "And that," I said to John at supper, "is your reward for finding me some nice, clean rooms with an understanding, obliging landlady." Which had, in

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fact, happened. Met Meric Wulf Dobson, a pleasant, extremely intelligent young man, whose family claims to be pre-Norman Conquest. Son of an ex-professor of Greek at Bristol University.

Oct. 9 One can get used to anything. Here is my day.
Wednesday. At 8.30 my nice new landlord made a noise outside my bedroom door with something that sounded like a pair of steel clappers. At nine sharp, breakfast. Then worked from ten till seven with half-hour's interval for lunch. Liver and onions. At seven sallied forth to a picture I had already seen in London. Home by ten to supper, the remains of yesterday's cold pressed beef. Cheese and margarine to finish with. At ten-thirty listened to my hired wireless, which I am allowed to play at this hour provided it cannot be heard by anybody standing on the mat outside the door. This means reducing the volume at least sixteen times. Nevertheless, by sitting with my ear within six inches of the machine, I managed to enjoy the fourth act of *Carmen*. Bed at eleven-thirty.

Oct. 10 Letter bearing on last Sunday's article :
Thursday.

Hellens
Much Marcle
Ledbury

October 6th, 1940

DEAR MR AGATE,

"History and Shakespeare" turned at least one family's thoughts for a whole evening from Molotov breadbaskets to the Wars of the Roses. Your Beauchamps, Nevilles and Despencers became the subject of a conversation so involved that I found myself consulting an old book of mine, *A Catalogue and Succession of the Kings, Princes, Dukes, etc. since the Norman Conquest to this present yeare 1619; collected by Raphe Brooke Esquire, Yorke Heraude*. The book settled the genealogical questions at issue; it also contained two stories which may perhaps interest you.

The first concerns the bloke in the coffin.

"After this battaile at Tewkesbury, King Edward the fourth came to London on the 21 of May 1471 with thirty thousand men; and the same night, King Henry was murdered in the Tower of London and the morrow after, brought into St

Paule's Church in London, in an open Coffin bare-faced, where hee bled ; From thence he was conuayed to the Blacke-Fryars, and there also bled. Lastly, his body was conuayed to Windsor, and there buried."

The second is a description of Richard III and of what became of his body at and after Bosworth.

"By common report a monster in nature ; for hee had many teeth when he was borne. He was very much deformed of his body ; of stature he was but low, crooke-backed, his left shoulder much higher than the right, his visage vncomely, his complexion swart, his left arme withered almost to the bone. . . .

". . . the slain body, all ragged and torne, naked and not so much as a clout left to couer his shame, was trussed behind Blanch Sengler, his Pursuiant of Arms, like a Hog or Calfe, his head and armes hanging on the one side of the horse & his legs on the other side, all besprinkled with mire and blood, & was so brought to Leicester, & there for a miserable spectacle, the space of 2 daies lay naked and vnburied ; his remembrance being as odious to all, as his person deformed & loathsome to be looked upon. Lastly, his body was buried at Leicester, without any Funerall pompe."

Evidently Richmond also had his days when he was not in the giving mood.

You mention Shaw's Warwick. Lyall Swete, who, as you will remember, played the part when *St Joan* was first produced, told me that he was directly descended from one of Isabella le Despenser's children. I forgot which, but somewhere among now inaccessible papers I have a long letter from him tracing his descent.

Another side issue, only remotely connected with Tewkesbury. How many playgoers who see Henry V's pretty wooing of his Kate (which at the Old Vic a year or two ago unaccountably took place in a palanquin) realise that the lady afterwards, as my *Catalogue* puts it, "Married a Noble Gentleman, named Owen Theodor of Wales" ? One wonders if she had equal difficulty in learning what a finger is in Welsh.

I hope you will forgive a disconnected letter. To make it still more so, I would add that I was wounded in France, and have been in a plaster strait-jacket for four months.

Yours truly,

ROGER MACHELL

That's what I call a letter. When I had finished reading it my eye travelled to the mantelpiece, where stands a photograph of the best Richard I ever saw—Benson's.

Oct. 11 Read Bernard Darwin's reminiscences called *Life is Friday. Sweet, Brother*. Very well done. Signs that the famous urbanity is part of the Cambridge manner, something cultivated like a golf course cut out of a forest. But there is plenty of jungle left, witness the liking for tigers like John Mytton, benevolent leopards like Osbaldeston, and the jackals of murder. Here B. D.'s taste is irreproachable. A "harmless little fellow like Crippen" is hardly worth considering. Palmer's his man, not Pritchard. And always he asks the right questions. Who was the person with the odd walk seen coming down St Paul's Road, Camden Town, at a quarter to five in the morning after Phyllis Dimmock had been killed? Who was the man that Helen Lambie saw coming out of Miss Gilchrist's flat? Who wrote the note to Rose Harsent at Peasehall, with those characteristic capital P's in the middle of a word, which brought the poor girl downstairs to her death in the middle of the night and a thunderstorm? Who telephoned the message to William Herbert Wallace which sent him on that fool's errand to the non-existent Menlove Gardens East, from which he returned to find his wife murdered? Was it William Herbert himself? And why did he choose Qualtrough for a name? In my view the Wallace case is the best of all modern crimes; chess figures in it, and the case for and against is as well balanced as a match between great masters.

Personally I have always taken the best of the vintage crimes of a hundred and more years ago to be the murder of William Weare by John Thurtell, aided and abetted by those two unsavoury scoundrels Hunt and Probert. Darwin likes Thurtell because he belonged to the world of prize fighters and billiard sharps and touts. "The women in the case, sleepless and terrified upstairs, hearing something heavy being dragged across the garden, are full of the right quality, and have a touch of De Quincey and Ratcliff Highway." Bernard approves of Thurtell because he knew Belcher; I approve of him because he was always prating of his friend Edmund Kean, of whom he gave an excellent imitation. For the rest he was born to evil, a crook and a blackguard whose only job of work was to act as second to the bruisers of the day. He figures under the name of Tom Turtle in Hazlitt's account of the fight between the Gas-man and Bill Neate. Hazlitt sits next to him on the

coach going down to the fight. "My friend the trainer was confined in the topics to fighting dogs and men, to bears and badgers; beyond this he was quite chap-fallen." Borrow, who put Thurtell into *Lavengro*, described his features as "a blending of the bluff and the sharp." His kind are still to be seen wherever greyhounds are raced, though they no longer rise to the dignity of murder. Bernard is good on Thurtell, though he doesn't seem to know that Robert Surtees witnessed the execution of Thurtell's accomplice Probert, hanged in the following year for horse-stealing in company with two others convicted of the same crime, and a burglar. The account found among Surtees's papers concludes: "The drop suddenly fell, and a thrill ran through the crowd as those four white-covered heads assumed the same sideway attitude as they were launched into eternity."

Oct. 18 From a letter:
Sunday.

All I know about great acting is that it is an EXPERIENCE which leaves its mark for a life-time something akin to being caught in a thunder-storm in a rowing boat with only a pair of bathing-drawers between you and the wrath of Heaven, that an ACTOR may even leave out the best of his (and Shakespeare's) lines and put in a few out of the wrong play for good measure provided he's got in him what Arnold Bennett, or Job, or somebody, called in another context the root of the matter, that he may be melodramatic, blustering, brawling, and barnstorming provided he has a fire kindled from the divine spark, towering eloquence, and the essential thunder to storm with.

Oct. 14 Charles Morgan has got the book-reviewers in the
Monday. stranglehold of spiritual blackmail. Either we must hold his view of love-making or confess ourselves dirty dogs. I won't have it. It all goes back to a passage in *The Fountain*—the hero is writing a love-letter to his young woman:

I do not believe that the bodily delight of love is sin, but that it becomes a deadly betrayal wherever a human relationship is obsessed by the acceptance, or by the desire of it. Either you and I were by our discovery of each other made gods with power to create, in our relationship, a perdurable essence,

higher than ourselves, independent of our delights, or we were animals caught in a trap. . . . Our love was a predestined force that would create of itself a personality—a hypostasis—more beautiful and vital and lasting than ourselves, or it was a sterile pleasure, no more.

It is really time somebody told our Charles something of the nature of a love-letter. Let Balzac do it :

Lousteau répondit à Dinah ; mais, au lieu de répondre avec son cœur, il fit de l'esprit. La lettre n'en fut que plus dangereuse, elle ressemblait à une lettre de Mirabeau à Sophie. Le style des vrais amants est limpide. C'est une eau pure qui laisse voir le fond du cœur entre deux rives ornées des riens de la vie, émaillées de ces fleurs de l'âme nées chaque jour et dont le charme est enivrant, mais pour deux êtres seulement. Aussi, dès qu'une lettre d'amour peut faire plaisir au tiers qui la lit, est-elle à coup sur sortie de la tête et non du cœur. Mais les femmes y seront toujours prises : elles croient alors être l'unique source de cet esprit.

Charles, I suppose, will always be taken in by his flux of spirituality.

Oct. 15
Tuesday.

TO G. W. STONIER
OF THE "NEW STATESMAN"
ON FAILING TO REVIEW "EGO 4"

Some people write for *Comic Cuts*
And some for journals tonier ;
Some journalists the 'phone affect,
Others are even phonier ;
Some seed must fall on stony ground,
But need that ground be Stonier ?

Oct. 16 Dined last night at the Randolph with Archie
Wednesday. Macdonell, his wife, and Leslie Banks. The menu,
which was the ordinary hotel dinner, much too
elaborate for war-time. Hors d'œuvres, choice of soup, sweet-
breads, partridge, sweet, and savoury. An admirable bottle or
two of Pommard, a lot of good talk, and, what is rarer, good
listening. Archie said that the best talk immediately before
the war was to be heard in Fleet Street during the lunch hour
and at the table reserved for Bevan Wyndham-Lewis, Johnny

Morton, James Bone, Douglas Woodruff, and Hilaire Belloc. He was too modest to include himself, though he might have done. He reminds me of that one of R. L. S.'s talkers who "bends ideas as an athlete bends a horse-shoe, with a visible and lively effort. . . . A Herbert Spencer who should see the fun of the thing." Told us that the wittiest impromptu he had ever heard was Bevan's description of Mistinguette as

A rose-red cutie half as old as Time.

Oct. 17 Boswell's bicentenary. "It never does to neglect Thursday. Johnson," says Quiller-Couch. And I say that it never does to take Boswell from the shelf unless you are prepared to throw away the next couple of hours. I have just wasted three, the book opening at the delightful story of Lowe's picture of the Deluge refused by the Academy. The subject, you remember, was the last of the antediluvian race, swimming, with his infant child held aloft, towards the one remaining dry spot on which waited a famished, expectant lion. What a picture for the Douanier Rousseau! And if ever Obey's *Noah* is filmed this is a shot which must not be omitted.

There is a curious passage in Boswell under the date of Monday, March 27, 1775.

I met him [Johnson] at Drury-lane play-house in the evening. Sir Joshua Reynolds, at Mrs Abington's request, had promised to bring a body of wits to her benefit; and having secured forty places in the front boxes, had done me the honour to put me in the group. Johnson sat on the seat directly behind me; and as he could neither see nor hear at such a distance from the stage, he was wrapped up in grave abstraction, and seemed quite a cloud, amidst all the sunshine of glitter and gaiety. I wondered at his patience in sitting out a play of five acts, and a farce of two.

But why does Johnson sit *behind* Boswell? The party is Reynolds's, Boswell would certainly not of his own initiative take the seat in front of Johnson, Reynolds would certainly not wittingly affront the Great Man. I suggest that deference is being paid by his host to Boswell's status as a dramatic critic. A thinnish peg for an article, but I guess it will have to do for Sunday.

Oct. 18 Friday. On the steps of the Martyrs' Memorial I met George Gee, which gave my thoughts another turn. After lunch became wholly secular. Spent the afternoon delving into William Roughead's *Rascals Revived*. I was particularly interested in his account of the cheat, procuress, and blackmailer who invented and gave her name to the famous Poudre Rachel. For years I thought this had been called after the great actress. I made certain discoveries, however, when I came to write my little "Life." One was that Rachel had foisted on the Comédie not only her brother but her three sisters. Rebecca and Lia were passably bad actresses, but Sarah wouldn't do at all. So she gave it up and went into the perfumery business with a lotion known as *L'Eau des Fées*. This seemed to settle it, and I thought no more on the matter. And now comes old Roughead to tell me that Sarah Rachel Russell, the inventor of the Poudre Rachel, was born in London in 1806—always discrediting that Aughrim, near Ballinasloe in Ireland, had the honour of her birth in 1814—and after becoming the bride of an assistant chemist in Manchester first became known to the public as proprietress of a fried-fish shop in Vere Street, Clare Market. In the course of her nefarious career she claimed to be related to the tragédienne, a bust of whom embellished her establishment. But the whole story is fascinating. So fascinating that it has moved a generally sober and even pawky writer to the purple of "And if the *Dictionary of National Biography*, that 'heavenly enchiridion,' has seen fit to deny the entrée to Madame Rachel, she has at least secured a niche in the criminous reredos of renown."

To the pictures in the evening. I do this almost every night, the alternative being to sit at home 'with a book.' But I spend all day with a book, and hardly know whether I am reading it or writing it. I must have some sort of change; I don't suppose that even Suppé wanted to compose morning, noon, and night.

Oct. 22 Tuesday. My brother Edward died on Friday last during an operation. He did not know the true nature of his disease, deep-seated and unsuspected, did not fear the operation, and had no mental suffering. Even if he had, he possessed the stoicism to meet it. He was buried in the family

grave at the Unitarian Church at Monton Green, Manchester, and as the coffin was being lowered a near-by siren wailed. I thought of Macbeth's "Nothing can touch him further." Nothing could touch Edward at any time. He made for himself a way of living and was not to be turned from it. Hardened to seeing his gifts unrecognised, he would do nothing to secure their recognition, or to turn them to commercial advantage. He was invited to collaborate in a film about Cyrano de Bergerac but declined "out of respect to (a) the original Cyrano, (b) Rostand, and (c) myself." He would not hear of compromise. "Que je pactise ? Jamais, jamais !" He would spend months translating the works of Klopstock or Platen, not knowing or caring whether they would find a publisher. He was dissuaded with difficulty from translating the fourth part of Heine's *Reisebilder*. When the question of market was raised he exuded vitriol. "There ought to be one," he would say with finality. He pursued the unreadable just because it was unreadable. He sought out the librarian of a well-known library and demanded to be shown the store-room to which were relegated uncalled-for books ; these he insisted on arranging and cataloguing, "as they must obviously be the best." In some ways he never grew up, and to the end of his life remained ignorant of the things with which the average child is familiar. He was a formidable wit with a dual mind, half Thersites and half Mr Dick, and could change from one to the other in the course of a single sentence.

The *Manchester Guardian* wrote in its obituary notice :

Though Edward Agate was apprenticed to the cotton trade, a passionate interest in modern music led to his taking up music as a career in his early twenties. In his efforts to introduce a modernistic note to the musical life of Manchester Agate paid particular attention to the works of Delius. He enlisted the aid of Sir Thomas Beecham and persuaded him to extend his musical enterprises to Manchester. Agate reaped his reward, for the first notes of Delius were heard in the Free Trade Hall (by a disappointingly small audience, however) and Delius himself was present. Soon after this Agate forsook the cotton trade and joined the Beecham orchestra in London as viola player. He was associated with the orchestra and its conductor for many years. He published several volumes of songs of a character which he himself called English Lieder,

and it was his appreciation of these which led the late Samuel Langford to describe their author as "Manchester's most musical son."

His output of compositions was small but of an intensely personal modern idiom. Perhaps his best-recognised activity was the translation into English of numerous opera libretti and other works from foreign texts. Among these were Wagner's *Ring*, the many operas of Rimsky-Korsakoff, and the standard work on orchestration by the same author.

On going through Edward's papers we found a letter to Jock dated July 6, 1940, and never posted. In it he writes:

As for me I feel an immense elation; and conceited tho' it may seem, if I must disappear to-morrow, I feel that, possessed of 4s. 9d. at the moment, my work is done. You will understand. And now that I am getting morbid or super-courageous, you will see on the reverse side of this bit of paper that I have been reading sermons. *Immonde passe-temps? Occupation incroyable?* Read the quotations and ponder!

1. "When our Saviour was reared up aloft on the Cross that same hanging was very painful unto Him. But where He did hang here but for a time, if *thou* amend not thy life, thou shalt hang in the gibbet of hell for evermore."

John Fisher

2. "An ox will relish the tender flesh of kids with as much gusto and appetite, as an unspiritual and unsanctified man will do the discourses of angels."

Jeremy Taylor

8. "But as in the face of Death, when he lays hold upon me, I shall see the face of God, so in the agonies of Death, in the anguish of that dissolution, in the sorrows of that valediction, in the irreversibleness of that transmigration, I shall have a joy, which shall no more evaporate, than my soul shall evaporate—a joy, that shall pass up, and put on a more glorious garment above, and be joy super-invested in glory. Amen."

John Donne

Oct. 25 Spoke at the Union. The motion was the establishment of a Chair of Drama at Oxford, proposed by **Friday.** Leslie Banks and opposed by A. G. Macdonell. One of the undergraduates made the excellent point that you can't mix dead languages and living drama, and that if Oxford dons

were allowed to contact the living drama they would kill it. I summed up the debate with a distinct bias against the whole business of National Theatres. Talking about idealists and the harm they do I suggested that the proper way to deal with the C. P. Scotts is to behead them in the morning, give them an Abbey funeral in the afternoon, and canonise them in the evening. So with the proposed Chair of Drama. Establish it in the morning, chop it up for firewood in the afternoon, and in the evening make a bonfire of it on the steps of the Martyrs' Memorial. "What about the black-out?" piped some vulgar little boy. The motion was carried handsomely, 281 votes to 89.

Oct. 26 Letter from George Jean Nathan, dated September
Saturday. 28th, in which he says :

I keep wondering how you are faring under the damage from the skies. My prayers are with you all. At the moment here, it looks as if we will be shinning up Fujiyama before the year is out. I am brushing up on my Japanese and can already say "Get to hell out of here!" like a native. (I can also say, "O Mimosa San, what have you on for to-night, and how about it?")

A card from Jock from Scotland asking why I have not written. Do tell him, if you will, that I wrote him at length in August. Why he didn't get the letter, I don't know. There was, surely, nothing censorable in it, unless your blue-pencillers objected to the news that the Nazis are sons-of-bitches.

Oct. 27 Compèred a concert held in the Regal Cinema at
Sunday. Henley-on-Thames on behalf of the Red Cross. The artists were Parry Jones, Flotsam and Jetsam, Enid Cruickshank, Cyril Fletcher, Robert Easton, and Moiseiwitsch. A ticklish job, though I rather liked it; perhaps it was the combination of a lovely day, the car-drive through October woods, and the champagne which had been thoughtfully provided.

Oct. 28 The *Times Lit. Supp.* in its leader on Boswell's
Monday. bicentenary has this sentence: "There have even been boiled-down editions to tickle the palates of the half-educated." But half-education is better than none, and to ensure this is the object of these shortened editions of the

classics. I myself have not time to read—and my business is largely reading—the whole of Karl Marx, Spengler, Mommsen, Einstein, Ouspensky, *Mein Kampf*, and so on, the result being that I have just had to dip inexpertly, whereas a summary of each would have enabled me to dip expertly. Of course such versions are not for anybody taking up economics, philosophy, history, and so on as a profession. Now apply this to letters. Books like Bailey's *Shorter Boswell*, or Pritchard's Abridged Edition, are not meant for people whose job is letters. They are intended for Army subalterns and the like, and are excellent little volumes, doing capital service.

Oct. 29 Spent the morning reading. Found this passage in *Tuesday*. Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, as originally written according to the MS. found at Malahide Castle :

I had a slight return of that spleen or hypochondria or whatever it should be called, which formerly made me so miserable, and which operates not only as to the present, but throws a gloom upon everything, whether past or future. The blackness of the imagination blackens every object that it takes in. How much reason have I to thank God that I now have hardly any remains of so direful a malady.

I thank God that I, too, have had fewer of these bouts since the war.

Oct. 30 Dine with Meric Dobson at his rickety rooms in *Wednesday*. New Inn Hall Street. His sitting-room consists of a centre bit large enough for a dining-table; the rest of the room is made up of alcoves. Rather odd furnishings. Bookshelves mostly Virginia Woolf and Arabic and Persian dictionaries—M. D. is translating Arab newspapers for the B.B.C.—divans so low you couldn't get a soup-plate under them; an immense gold picture-frame with nothing in it; a back-cloth which represents either Adonis before, or Lucrece after, the contretemps; three or four very elegant Empire chairs shabby enough to be genuine; candlesticks, beer-bottles, flowers, and a general air of mess and mind. Dinner cooked by M. D. and excellent. The other guests are a psychological

novelist and a young medico walking the hospitals. Both have dates about ten—one with a plot, the other with a case—so I bag the room's one comfortable chair while M. D. squats on the floor by the rather tinny gramophone and replenishes it with well-worn records of Beethoven's Ninth. Presently the novelist returns—presumably the plot has failed to turn up—and the three of us adjourn to my over-lighted room, where we drink whisky and debate why the Jews, with few exceptions, have created nothing in art. "What about the Old Testament?" asks M. D.

Oct. 31 To the New Theatre to hear Leslie Hutchinson.
Thursday. There are two Hutches. The Hutch who bows his acknowledgments is playboy and exquisite—civilisation's coloured tops. This is the first Hutch. The second is the figure seated at the piano, and it can be a very credible imitation of primitive man. This Hutch sings such songs as might have fallen from the lips of Umslopogaas, or the executioner in *Salome*, or Masrur in *Hassan*, or the personal attendant of Ozymandias. The shades of eve falling fast, a third Hutch in a heliotrope lighting is presently telling us :

When I'm not crying,
 There's rain in my eyes,
 I am not to blame
 If a few drops fall !

And then, with something like wit, there comes from his fingers a tinkle of "Jardin sous la Pluie." Now Granada is well enough, and Debussy's raindrops are pretty enough. But have these quite the compelling power of the home product? Therefore the singer winds up with :

When the steeple bell
 Says "Good-night! Sleep well!"

which hits off the English note to a nicety—the note of Oxford, early Tennyson, and the B.B.C. closing down.

Nov. 1 Dined with the Junior Proctor, Nevill Coghill, in
Friday. hall at Exeter. Addressed the Experimental Theatre Club.

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Nov. 3 Sunday. Peter Ustinov's Viennese opera-singer at the Players is a grotesque whose ugliness, as Pater might have said, is a ravaged beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries. Here is one who has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her. Creaking and bedizened, this scarecrow is pathetic because she too has not passed away, but is still of this world in so far as there is life under that powder, paint, false hair, and all the other cloaks to decay. She is like an Empire in ruins, and there is one of those great seventeenth-century sermons in the libidinous cackle which falls from her senile lips.

Nov. 4 Monday. Letter to Hugh Walpole :

148 Walton Street
Oxford

Nov. 4, '40

MY DEAR HUGH,

Don't get me wrong, as American gangsters say, on the subject of historical novels. When I said that historical novels are bunk I was not denying that they may be masterpieces—of fiction. My point is that they are too fictional. Of course *Salammbo* is a masterpiece. It is the period plus Flaubert. But, to me, the result of F.'s marvellous period-sense is that it affects the period to the point where it becomes Flaubert-conscious, which is what I mean by "bunk." Do you suppose that if Henry James had written a novel about King Alfred you would believe that the cakes got burned in that hair-splitting manner? Do you remember H. J. on "a mere bun"? (*Ego* 4, p. 182.) What would he not have made out of those cakes? Would they have been "mere"? I see pyramids of *mille* and more than *mille feuilles*. Then do you think that Lytton Strachey's *Elizabeth and Essex* has anything to do with the real E. and E.? What delights me is Strachey's sense of E. and E. I feel that the essay ends with "E. and O. E." printed in invisible ink! Turn Graves's *I, Claudius* into an essay and I will savour every word of it. But let somebody tell me that his Roman Emperor said this or that to a favourite bath-attendant and I disbelieve as flatly as when Hollywood says: "This is Westminster Abbey." I just sit back and say: "No, it isn't! Garn!" You know my passion that concerns Johnson and Boswell. Heavy

should ever read a novel about them ! Biography is a form of history ; fiction never can be, and I, personally, don't want it to try. I want history to be nothing but history and fiction to be wholly fictitious. " Let us have no meandering," said the old lady who won David Copperfield's caul. I am equally firm for no tampering.

You are much too kind about my share in *The English Wits*. I both like and dislike your suggestion that I ought to have lived between 1815 and 1885. It is true that I could have read *Pickwick* as it came out, glimpsed Kean, had a good view of Macready, Phelps, and Little Robson, been present in the Manchester Collegiate Church when Malibran sang for the last time, and attended Sarah's début in London. But I should have missed a lot—Ibsen, *Rosenhavaler*, Mrs Patrick Campbell, Montague, the Dreyfus affair, Charlie Chaplin, the modern golf-ball, Jock, my exquisite little horse Ego, and the no less exquisite you. My view is that my date is 1840-1910, which gives me the last of Rachel and the best of Bernhardt.

Am glad you have gone to Keswick, though what there is to do there except apostrophize Skiddaw I can't imagine.

Yours ever,
JIMMIE

Nov. 7 " . . . dont il ne sera plus question sur cette
Thursday. terre." Thus Flaubert on the funeral of M.

Dambreuse ; whether there would be question of him anywhere else F. did not go into. Joad would appear to say no : " We are instruments of life created by a purpose which transcends us and discarded when that purpose is served. If we are broken before our time, that is of little moment ; life can create innumerable others to take our place. ' The life to which I belong uses me,' writes Wells, ' and will pass beyond me and I am content.' Life, in fact, is the end, individuality the means, and who, after all, are we to make such a fuss about the continuance of our personal selves ? " Nonsense ! You might as well say that the railway train is the end, the passengers the means, and who, after all, are passengers, etc. etc.

If the Joad-Wellsian mugwumpery is right, think of all the readjustments it necessitates. To begin with, somebody will have to devise another ending to *Pilgrim's Progress*, in which no trumpets sound for Christian, there being no other side for them ~~to go~~. Stevenson's " happy-starred, full-blooded spirit " ~~goes~~ into the spiritual land " but takes a header

into that "sweet f—— all" which was the soldier's name for the Arabian desert. Newman talks nonsense with his *Lead, Kindly Light*, for now the light is out, and the angel faces are not there to smile. Handel's *I Know that my Redeemer Liveth* is as much in touch with first and last things as the Beer Barrel Polka. Chartres Cathedral, falling down to-morrow morning, will not be more meaningless than it was standing. And must not the Twenty-third Psalm go? Why, in the valley of the shadow of death, should we fear evil, since there is no more evil and no more machinery with which to experience fear? The Joad-Wells view is not invalidated by all this. But it damnably impoverishes literature and art.

Nov. 8 Lupino Lane, here with *Me and My Girl*, told us
Friday. to-night that he missed a fortune of £250,000 and
 £80,000 worth of jewellery by six hours, his great-
 aunt, the famous Sara Lane, dying in the morning after
 having arranged to sign her new will in the afternoon. "I was
 on the way to a posh school when the news came," said Nip.
 "Dad saw the death in an evening paper which he picked up
 in the railway carriage. We got out of the train and I went
 to work."

Nov. 11 Paul Fratellini is dead, which provides the excuse for
Monday. an article on clowns for *John o' London's Weekly* over
 which I spent most of the day. It was Fratellini
 who was responsible for the dictum: "The clown has no life
 outside the theatre or circus. Between performances he exists,
 and no more. His whole being is bounded by a carpet thirteen
 yards square." In my opinion, he was not a patch on Grock,
 though the French thought very highly of him and accorded
 him and his troop the honour of a performance within the walls
 of the Théâtre-Français. Gémier once said, "Now that Footit
 is dead and the Fratellinis have gone to England, the French
 theatre has nothing for me to laugh at except its tragedians."
 The clowns were a complete failure when Cochran brought them
 over to appear in one of his revues, and if the gallery did not
 boo them it was a near thing.

Supped with B. Lillie at the Randolph. She is on tour with
 Vic Oliver in three Noel Coward playlets interspersed with some

of her own revue turns. Told me that she finds provincial audiences difficult. I don't wonder; her malice is too slight and subtle for simpletons used to wireless comedians and their kind. When, to-night, she parodied a torch-singer it seemed to me that the audience failed to grasp the burlesque and thought she was torch-singing in earnest, and not very well. I heard one woman say as we came out—"Too casual, I call her. Too off-hand for Oxford." Meric Dobson tells me that when Farjeon's *Little Revue* was here the audience took the number "Voilà les Non-stop Nudes" with perfect seriousness.

Nov. 12 Saw on a shop-front "B. Juggins. Butcher of Tuesday. distinction." Edward would have loved this.

Nov. 14 Cheerfulness broke in early this morning, and for Thursday. no discernible reason unless it was the bashing the Italians got at Taranto. I kept going from sitting-room to bedroom and from bedroom to sitting-room singing *à la Feste* in *Twelfth Night* "Oh, the fourteenth day of November!"

Nov. 15 Found something German in my mail this morning. Friday. Opening it distastefully I read:

Es scheint meine zu sein. Ja, da ist der Riss, den sie durch den Sturz eines Gower-Street Omnibus in jüngeren und glücklicheren Tagen davon trug. Hier ist der Fleck am Futter, der durch Explosion eines alkoholfreien Getränkes in Leamington entstand.

And so on. It was Teschenberg's translation of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, with the title *Ernst Sein*! (See *Ego* 4, p. 127.) Moncrieff has become Montford, Lady Bracknell is called Lady Brancaster, the gardener Moulton is given a line and there is a new character, Mr Gribsby, of the firm of Gribsby and Parker, Solicitors. The play is in four acts, the second being divided into two to make room for the additional scene of Algernon's threatened arrest for debt.

Nov. 16 A newly arrived present of Theatrical Cuttings Saturday. 1885-98 proves convincingly the decline of interest in the theatre. Or, perhaps, the means of implementing that interest. When John Gielgud produced *King Lear*,

The Times next morning had three-quarters of a column, the *Telegraph* and *Chronicle* half a column, while the *Mail*, *Express*, and the three evening papers may have squeezed out a couple of columns between them. Say three columns in all. The cutting-books in front of me show that on the morning after Irving's *King Lear* (Nov. 10, 1892) *The Times*, *Telegraph*, *Chronicle*, *Standard*, *News*, and *Graphic* had *eleven* columns between them with more to follow when the evening papers came out. And not the narrow, mingy column of to-day, but the wide, small-type, crammed-up column then in vogue.

Among the curiosities I note this :

Mr Irving has always been a remarkable personality. As an invoice clerk in the office of Thacker and Co., in Newgate-street, he impressed his fellow-employees no less by his gentlemanliness and amiability and his conscientiousness in work than by the sense of refinement which prompted him to institute among those who shared his desk a little code of rules by which each agreed to be subject to a small fine for any disregard of the niceties of grammar or the other proprieties of speech.

Also an account of the presentation to Irving of a statue of himself as the Burgomaster, the sculptor being Onslow Ford. I read :

At present the work is in clay. By-and-by it will be cast in bronze, and it is then intended to place in the pedestal a piece of mechanism, which, on a spring being pressed, will reproduce the terrible chink, chink, chink of the accusing bells, thereby giving an artistic completeness to the burgomaster's attitude.

Where is that monstrosity now ?

Nov. 17 Sunday About my attitude to Oxford's young men I have decided that to pretend to be their age or anything like it is merely to make myself ridiculous, that the proper thing to do is to accept their well-meant homage and play the part I am expected to play. In pursuance of this new philosophy I repaired to the Gloucester Arms to-night and sat for three hours in a corner sipping half-pints of beer, stroking a white imaginary beard, and uttering oracular remarks. The result was a fierce attack of depression whereby I was home

again by a quarter past ten, and after some leathery pressed beef sat down by a dismal fire to compose a Sonnet to Old Age beginning :

When in the wreckage of my tumbling face . . .

Nov. 19 Letter from Alfred Douglas :
Tuesday.

1 St Ann's Court
Nizells Avenue
Hove 2, Sussex

Nov. 18, 1940

DEAR JAMES,

The Importance of Being Earnest was originally planned to be an eighteenth-century play (costumes of the *School for Scandal* period). Oscar told me the idea of the play two or three times before he wrote it. I suggested that it would be much better to make it modern, and he said "I believe you are perfectly right," and he adopted my suggestion. It was originally in four acts, and I think it is quite likely that the Baron Teschenberg, whose German translation you mention, got hold of a typed copy of the original draft of the play. When Oscar was sold up at Tite Street immediately after his arrest, all sorts of letters and documents disappeared. Brokers and masses of other people wandered about the house and no doubt some of them pinched anything they could lay hands on. Probably some one took this draft of the play, and later on, after Oscar's death, this Baron Teschenberg may easily have bought it from a second-hand dealer. The play was cut down to three acts chiefly, I believe, because George Alexander suggested that it wanted some cutting. Oscar, of course, consulted me about this and I agreed, but until you brought up the question I had almost forgotten all about it. I do vaguely remember something about "Mr Gribbsby" of the firm "Gribbsby and Parker." No doubt they figured in the original draft. I distinctly remember that "Lady Brancaster" was the original name of Lady Bracknell. Oscar invariably took for his characters the names of places where he and I had stayed together, *e.g.* Worthing, Goring, and Basildon. My mother's country house, at which he stayed two or three times, was near Bracknell; Bracknell was the railway station. Brancaster was a place in Norfolk at which I stayed with a tutor who was coaching me in the vac. while I was at Oxford. So he took the name, but afterwards changed it to Bracknell. All this is first-class stuff, and I am heaping coals of fire on

1940]

EGO 5

your head by giving it to you considering the shabby way you have always treated me in the matter of reviewing and noticing any of my publications. However there you are !

Yours ever,

ALFRED DOUGLAS

Nov. 25 A timely letter from Brother Harry, on the subject
Monday. of How Not to Grow Old :

46 Ainsty Avenue

Dringhouses

York

23/11/40

DEAR JIMMIE,

All my life I have determined that I will never grow old, to which end I purpose, when the War is over, to take a course in Flying !

Boxing, Rowing, Swimming, and Dancing will follow Flying with, penultimately, Golf. After that will follow the final descent to Bowls. But even then I shall not be old, merely less young.

Not till I was Fifty did I join the Youth Hostel movement and begin to realise the truism that ageing is largely a mental matter. Advance into years holds no terror if one does youthful things IN THE SPIRIT OF THE YOUNG. Wasn't it yourself, man, with the two eyes of ye, witnessed meself at the ripening age of fifty run a hurdle race at Goathland against a man nearly thirty years my junior ?

True ! The hairs on my head may be likened to a hedge "where sheep do be lepping a gap." But men have been bald at twenty-five and saved money at the barber's thereby. So with my youthful amusements, which cost less than those which, by unfortunate custom, too often accompany the older years.

My present Cycling and my future Flying, Boxing, Rowing, Swimming, and Dancing may not have the unhampered movements of a youngster, but I venture to think that my mental appreciation of each pastime will certainly be as keen and perhaps keener than theirs, because I extract every penny-weight of enjoyment from every ounce of 'play.' I doubt if they do.

When I am less young than ever before (I reject the word 'old,' which I have, since I began this letter, physically deleted from my Dictionary) and have arrived at Bowls, I do not doubt that I shall be unable to 'get down' to the Green. Therefore will I have trenches dug in my lawn—nay, I will dig them—

with appropriate ramps to them so that I may bowl without bending!

I am vastly amused by those individuals, knowing me not well, who, when they learn that I cycle, say "But why don't you buy a car?" Is the bicycle then to be a prerogative of the poor? Too long has the expression "the bicycle is the poor man's car" been allowed to blot the pages of our Daily Press. DOES A MAN GIVE UP ROWING BECAUSE HE CAN AFFORD A YACHT?

C. P. Scott was not a fool. He cycled through the streets of Manchester until within a few months of his death. Why? I know. Think you that I have pedalled Fifteen Thousand Miles since I was Fifty years of age for fun?

YES.

Ever
HARRY

Nov. 27 Letter from Leo Pavia:
Wednesday.

112 Netherwood Road
West Kensington, W.14

Nov. 24th, 1940

DEAR JAMES,

I know what a great admirer of the Civil Service you are, and here is the latest specimen of their admirable consistency and logicity.

I have occasion to apply for the *n*th time to a Government Office for employment in connection with German. On arriving there I am asked to translate a letter in German from one university teacher to another. I do this. I am patted on the back. I am then taken to see an elderly Major who says, Haw, haw, and remarks that there is a Snag.

MAJOR. You see, haw haw . . . we want experts on Bills of Lading. What do you know about Bills of Lading, Freights, and Invoices?

PAVIA. Less than the dust.

MAJOR. A pity. We want experts, business people who have been employed for years by firms dealing with Germany.

PAVIA. Excuse me, but why in that case do I have to spend half an hour in translating a letter from one professor to another?

MAJOR. That is the snag. If we gave the average applicant who is presumably used to Bills of Lading something of that kind to translate, he would do it easily: so we give him something in an entirely different direction!!

Only yesterday, meeting Ernest Fenton, did I hear of

Edward's demise. Well, I said, another first-class brain gone ; how few are remaining ! You must notice that particularly at Oxford, which has always produced the finest second-class brains in the world. Edward and I ought to have collaborated, particularly in music—the blend of his vinegary Scriabinism and my too too luscious Italianateness would have been ideal. Poor Edward . . . I have been thinking of him all the morning; never was there such a Websterian creature, his mind was saturated with Graves, Worms, Corpses, Death, Funerals, and Skeletons. Something went wrong with him in early youth, and now I come to think of it I never saw him laugh—indeed I might say, humiliating as the confession is, that I never succeeded in making him laugh, probably my only complete fiasco in that direction. No man had greater chances in life, and no one threw them away with such a careless magnificence. He was like a certain type of bridge player who, when holding a series of fine hands, deliberately undercalls, expecting the fine hands to continue, when he will sit up and call for all he is worth. But alas !—the fine hands change into twos and threes, and the chance of winning is over. But let us agree that Edward bore his Yarboroughs with the same acid equanimity as in the dazzling days of Beecham's Kings and Queens.

London is a little quieter for the moment. That you know. My position is so precarious, I shall *topple over* before you return. All the little savings are gone, and I live supported (to revive one of my oldest jokes)—by Involuntary Contributions. It is of course monstrous that a person so variously gifted should not be able to find adequate employment. But then the whole age is monstrous, muddled, and mediocre, and you are trebly lucky to have Booked your Seat so well in advance of This Performance.

Write me a long letter. I may come to stay with you for a few days later on. I hear you lead a charmed life, dandling baby undergrads on your knee in the morning and playing bridge with elderly Dons in the evening. And whisky, whisky all the way.

This blasted ribbon is jiggered, so will wish you Long Life, *Mazal*, also *Berocha*.

Your old
LEO

Nov. 30 Tennyson Jesse and H. M. Harwood's *London*
Saturday. *Front* is proof to me of the wisdom of cutting all
 war stuff out of this Diary. Particularly all war
conjecture. Here is Harwood writing on Christmas Day 1989

of the necessity of prolonging the war to the point when Germany accepts annihilation :

What I fear is that when the more immediate injustices are righted we shall—as is our way—compromise on the main issue to save a few months more of war. As a doctor I learned that if a certain germ needs boiling for five minutes you don't get sterilisation by boiling it only for two minutes. *Luckily we have the French always with us . . .*

Italics mine. What is the point *now* of passionate argument as to whether Italy will or will not come in ?

Dec. 3 From delightful Nancy Price's *Nettles and Docks* : *Tuesday.*

I really thought when my violin was taken from me that I could never care for anything again, ever since I had the capacity to direct the bow I had played it, and I probably practised too diligently for my years, not because I was driven to it, but for my own pleasure. I was thus able to play *some* of the Beethoven concertos when I was seven.

Italics mine. Why don't people who are ignorant of intricate subjects like music, fox-hunting, real tennis, and so on, and who can't keep quiet about them—why don't amateurs get somebody to vet their outpourings ?

Dec. 4 What with the laundry difficulty—they have an *Wednesday.* extraordinary system here of collecting your washing once a fortnight and bringing it back every three weeks—and the note of highbrow Oxford being grubbiness, I find I haven't changed my shirt since Saturday or my collars since Sunday. And to think that I used to pride myself on looking—well, smartish !

Dec. 5 Action and reaction are equal and opposite. *Thursday.* Sallied forth into High Street this morning—in my view only people who are at Oxford in the legitimate sense are entitled to say 'the High'—with a pair of horsey trousers, a relic of "jüngeren und glücklicheren Tagen," over my arm. Seeking out the most expensive tailor, I ordered a jacket and waistcoat in Harris tweed to match,

(Eight guineas, plus entertainment tax.) Thence to the shirt-maker, where I chose three shirts in white Oxford with half-inch stripes of Cambridge blue. Next, to the boot-maker who is to build me a pair of brogues. In this rig-out it is my intention to appear once a week, with no thought of startling the natives but purely to keep up my morale, which the Varsity 'note' of dirt just lets down.

Dec. 7 Was in the Chair at the Annual Dinner (in fact
Saturday. Luncheon) of the Savage Club, reopened to-day
after the blitz. Spoke, I think, well (in fact,
quite well).

Dec. 9 What a plague is this inaccuracy! Even clever
Monday. people like Stella Gibbons come croppers when they
write of things outside their own knowledge. In her
new story, "The Hoofer and the Lady," occurs this: "I
expect he remembers the naughty 'nineties and all that. Pretty
grim to see Nervo and Knox rioting over the very spot where
Cora Pearl used to swoon about in yards of grubby lace, what?"
Cora died in 1886, had not acted in France since 1867, and
never played in England.

Dec. 11 My appeal to young *Daily Express* readers to send
Wednesday. me some of their new writing has resulted in one
very moving poem. The author is Cadet W. H.
Burt, aged nineteen.

STEEL-DRIVER

One pit I never went down,
Here's another:
I am into the cage of it
To find my father.

I am a collier's son
And no collier:
But I am a soldier's son
And a soldier!

It was in the East Neuk I was born
Of a steel-driving clan:
Gin I drive no steel in the pit
I'll drive it in man.

Yon's my folk's blood on the coal,
 Mine's not with it :
 It'll run down the shaft and remix
 When a bayonet bids it.

Fallen coal made my fathers' graves
 And pit-props their death-kists :
 I'll bury myself in the war-mud
 To grapple their fists.

My father worked at the coal-face,
 Pit-head lassies his lovers,
 The coal-face I never saw—
 Gone father, gone brothers.

The coal-face I never saw—
 Father and brothers
 I'll find at the face of war
 And my clan among murders.

The cage at the pit-head is full,
 I'm in it too :
 It is back to my clan that I am
 With their scars of blue.

Dec. 15 A letter to Leo Pavia :
Sunday.

148 Walton Street
 Oxford

December 15, '40

DEAR LEO,

Thank you for what you wrote about Edward.

I wish I could ask you here. But there isn't a bedroom in the town, and landladies say "No visitors" in the tone in which old-fashioned mistresses used to say "No followers." Charlie would willingly sleep on the sofa and give you his room. But landladies are shy of sofas, which, it would seem, turn the most modest of us into Heliogabaluses.

Have made some charming acquaintances, all very clever young men; they know so much that I toil after them like Time after Shakespeare. Am reasonably fêted, and dine at some High Table when I would sooner be supping at a low. I would give all Oxford for some dingy little pub in Victoria or Knightsbridge, and what galls me is that I could have the dingy little pub to-morrow if only I had the pluck to return to town. But I haven't. I am, at this moment, a more contemptible figure than I've ever been—doing nothing useful, saving my skin, and grumbling because I can't drop into my

usual haunts. And, of course, prepared at any moment to write a patriotic article which would bring a lump into your throat. Yes, I think old man Ibsen would have found a place for me in the war comedy he would certainly be moved to write if he were living to-day.

I ought to be happy enough. Charlie is behaving admirably; Jock at Beaconsfield radiates goodwill and ideas; Stanley Rubinstein is in the best of tempers; I haven't seen a writ for weeks; I regret that Fred Leigh remains on the top of Cader Idris with Clara, but my asthma has been no worse. Yet I am as bored as Hedda Gabler, one of the reasons being that I miss my ponies at least as much as Hedda missed that saddle-horse. Wilde never wrote a truer line than

For he who lives more lives than one
More deaths than one must die.

Yesterday, however, was an exception. Archie Macdonell motored me to Bray, where Barry Neame was giving a luncheon-party to launch Maurice Healy's new book *Stay Me with Flagons*. This is a wine book, and you know the kind of thing: "Claret is an intellectual wine." "I confess I find the Rhône wines lacking in a sense of humour." "Pontet Canet is the least temperamental of Clarets, always conscious of its duty to please and refresh." All this strikes me as nonsense but amusing.

We began with oysters and champagne, after which lobster mould, partridge, creamed mushrooms, toasted cheese, a white wine and *six* vintage clarets in magnums. I had on one side, of me Charlie Cochran, in great form despite years, infirmity and stagnation in the theatre world, and on the other the daughter of Charles Morgan's French translator. I thought of asking her the French for "perdurable hypostasis," but refrained.

In the evening I went to a musical party given by Nevill Coghill. About twenty dons and graduates. We began with a Sonata for two violins by Handel. Then a young woman, I think a Pole, played some Bach, Rameau, and Mozart quite well, after which came an earnest young man who treated us to Byrd on the virginals, which he prefaced by saying in a tone of contempt, "I can't think why you want to listen to this instead of some jolly, romantic stuff on the modern piano." I couldn't think why we did! Sandwiches and mulled claret. And then, just when I thought we were all going to talk, the pianist announced Beethoven's Sonata, Op. 110, after which, believe it or not, there was a duet for two recorders, actually recorder and violin, the sort of thing we

shall hear a lot of if Clifford Bax ever writes a play about Mary, Queen of Scots. Last, Bråhms's E minor 'cello Sonata, *magnificently* played by a young Russian girl. Coghill, whose party it was, is a man of great charm, a combination of Owen Nares, Young Brooke in *Tom Brown's Schooldays* and, as he says himself, the Apollo Belvedere.

Your
JAMES

Dec. 16 When I vowed to hold my peace about Bernhardt
Monday. and Duse, it was on the implied condition that
 other people held theirs. Now that Desmond Mac-
Carthy has reopened the subject (by reprinting his old dramatic
criticisms) I hold myself absolved. "For my part I preferred
the art of Duse to that of Bernhardt. It was less imposing but
more beautiful; it gave me emotions I valued more." I have
no quarrel with this. My fight is with those who insist that
Bernhardt was a personality-monger and Duse a noble creature
who lay down and let authors walk over her. The truth is that
Eleanora, every bit as much as Sarah, was a number one, top-
hole egoist and personality-monger. "Signora Duse never
stoops to impersonation. I have seen her in many parts, but I
have never detected any difference in her." (Max Beerbohm.)
Again, also Max :

Duse is artistically right or wrong according as whether the
part enacted by her can or cannot be merged and fused into
her own personality. . . . Résignation was Duse's note. Re-
signedly Hedda Gabler shot the pistol from the window.
Resignedly she bent over the book of photographs with the
lover who had returned. Resignedly she lured him to drunken-
ness. Resignedly she committed his MS. to the flames. Re-
signation, as always, was the keynote of her performance.

All this in spite of the fact that there isn't an ounce of resigna-
tion in Ibsen's Hedda, who is a predatory little minx. Jules
Lemaître pointed out that when Duse's Marguerite gave her
heart to Armand "elle a même trouvé pour cela un beau geste
symbolique, un geste adorable d'oblation religieuse, que Dumas
fils n'avait certainement pas prévu." Duse, you see, was playing
Duse not Marguerite Gautier. Take the moment in *Ghosts* when
the fire breaks out and Pastor Manders starts yammering about

"a judgment on this house of sin." "Yes, of course," snaps Ibsen's Mrs Alving. The man is such a fool that she cannot be bothered to argue with him. Duse said "Yes, of course," like a benediction. About her Paula Tanqueray Desmond writes: "She lent a suggestion of a pathos and depth of spiritual loneliness which was not in that shrewdly but narrowly conceived character." In other words, Duse pushed Pinero's character off the stage and substituted herself, which substitution was hailed by everybody as a miracle of sensitivity. Yet when Sarah did the same thing she was accused of exhibitionism. Why not admit that the art of magnoperative acting consists not in going to your author but in making your author come to you, and that both Sarah and Duse were first-class show-women making the most of wholly dissimilar wares? I preferred the Frenchwoman to the Italian a thousand times, and I know which had the more difficult job. That Duse-esque mopings are infinitely easier than Sarah-esque tantrums is proved by the fact that while there have been near-Duses there has never been a near-Sarah. Louise Hampton's performance in *The Mother* gave to-day's playgoer a very good idea of what Duse in *Costi Sica*, or any other part, was like. A little more folding of the hands here, a little more unfolding there, and the result would have been Duse, or as near as makes no matter. Whereas I have never seen any performance which began to serve as a pointer to the other. That is my case against the view which pretends that while Sarah ran away from her authors and substituted herself Duse remained faithful to them. The truth is that Duse ran just as fast, but made such a show of sitting still that you failed to see her busy little legs.

Dec. 18 What charming things people do on occasion. A *Wednesday*, lady writes me from Wimbledon that some two years ago she picked up a second-hand copy of my novel *Responsibility*, whose former owner, one A. B. Rendall, had lavishly annotated it, that her house has been bombed and most of her library destroyed, but that my novel had been found riding the wreckage, which seemed to indicate that it should come back to me. And so she sent it. The book is battered but still an entity, and the fly-leaf bears the note "My second copy of a very remarkable book." And a lot more which modesty forbids. I have been purring all day.

Dec. 19 Jock has sent me this appropriate bit out of
Thursday. Shadwell :

BELFOND SENIOR. Well, adad, you are pleasant men, and have the neatest sayings with you ; " ready," and " spruce prig," and abundance of the prettiest witty words. But sure that Mr Cheatly is as fine a gentleman as any wears a head, and as ingenious, ne'er stir, I believe he would run down the best scholars in Oxford, and put 'em in a mouse-hole with his wit.

SHAMWELL. In Oxford ! Ay, and in London too !

BELFOND SENIOR. Goodsookers, cousin ! I always thought they had been wittiest in the Universities.

SHAMWELL. O, sic, cousin ; a company of puts, mere puts !

BELFOND SENIOR. Puts ! mere puts ! very good, I'll swear ; ha, ha, ha !

SHAMWELL. They are all scholar boys, and nothing else, as long as they live there ; and yet they are as confident as if they knew everything, when they understand no more beyond Magdalen Bridge than mere Indians !

Christmas Eve. Went to the cinema and sat through some nonsense called *The Sea Hawk*. Film ended with Queen Elizabeth hearing the Armada was about to sail, and promising to set about hewing a navy out of English oaks !

Christmas Day. Worked all day.

Boxing Day. Ditto.

Dec. 27 Went to town to deliver articles. Lunched with Pat
Friday. Mannock, fresh from his annual sweepstake. One of Pat's jobs is to keep his paper's obituary notices up to date. At the end of every year he and three others meet to declare their hundred candidates for obituary honours in the forthcoming twelve months, and to compare their score for the past year. " A great number of places are automatic," said Pat. " For example, everybody over eighty, all Balkan premiers, and so forth. Also having once napped somebody it would be foolish to drop him since, unlike a bad racehorse, he must come in some time." Pat's record is twenty ; this year he only scored nine. Here they are : Harry Tate, Gus Elen, Robert

Smillie, Arnold Dolmetsch, Sir Bindon Blood, Mary Anderson, Sir Oliver Lodge, Duke of Bedford, J. B. Joel. Cocking an auscultatory eye at me, Pat said, "You'll be glad to hear you're not on anybody's list *yet*, James."

Dec. 30 At the cinema: "When the Great Conductor plays
Monday. the last tune there won't be much fault found with
the bandsman who can swing it." Paul Whiteman
in the film, *Strike up the Band*.

Dec. 31 My year's work, sadly less than usual :
Tuesday.

<i>Sunday Times</i>	50,000 words
<i>Daily Express</i>	42,000 "
<i>Tatler</i>	60,000 "
Pseudonym	88,000 "
<i>Ego 4</i>	45,000 "
<i>Ego 5</i>	55,000 "
Odd articles	10,000 "

350,000 words

Earnings have been £1400 less than in 1938 and £600 less than in 1939.

Jan. 11 I wonder! The *Times Lit. Supp.* prints a long *Saturday.* article by Lord David Cecil, who argues that writers in war-time are entitled to forget the war and, "adjusted to life in the shelters beneath their ivory towers," go on polishing their prose. Surely everything depends on the age and health of the writer. With my asthma, or whatever it is which makes me halt for breath sometimes as often as a dozen times in a hundred yards, I do not see that I can be better employed than at my desk. Here, then, are some of the things which have *interested* me during the week in which Bardia fell and Tobruk is falling and Mussolini is getting the grin knocked off his fat, silly face.

Monday. Letter from John Balderston in Hollywood instructing me to collect the royalties on the Oxford Playhouse revival of *Berkeley Square* and give them to my pet theatrical charity.

Tuesday. Listening to Moiseiwitsch on the wireless playing Liszt's B minor Sonata. This confirmed my view, strongly shared by Jock, that the piece is empty and meaningless. The skull-and-crossbones theme with which Liszt tries to make my flesh creep affects me like a bad imitation of the dramatist Webster; his sentiment, the vein of the sickly *Liebestraum*, has always nauseated me.

Wednesday. Handsome reviews everywhere of young Allott's book about Jules Verne. "They let you down!" said Noel Coward about Tait and Allott, to whose attempts at playwriting I gave a lot of space in my earlier *Ego* books. "They ought to have had a West End success. Your little horse showed a greater sense of drama." Well, Allott has now pulled it off, and I am delighted.

Thursday. Made final casting arrangements for *Hedda Gabler*, which I have persuaded the Playhouse management to produce in ten days' time.

Friday. Letter from Maurice Baring, bedridden in Scotland, addressed to Desmond MacCarthy and me jointly:

Dec. 31, 1940

DEAR AGATE, DEAR DESMOND,

If there wasn't a war, and if I hadn't got *paralysis agitans* and an injured spine, and if my nurse weren't away on a holiday, I would have taken part in the ancient quarrel.

(1) *Of course* Duse Dusetised to the maximum. Just as Irving Irvingised to the maximum; sometimes triumphantly as in *Charles I* and sometimes disastrously, so they say, as in *Romeo* which *Punch* summed up by saying 'Wherefore art thou Romeo?'

Duse Dusetised sometimes triumphantly as in *La Locandiera*, sometimes falling flat as in *Cleopatra*, sometimes triumphantly and at the same time making nonsense of the piece and the author's intentions as when she played Magda, whom Sudermann created a *cabotine* (even Shaw wrote "How capitally Sarah brought out that vulgar side"), as a Tolstoi-like noble soul.

(2) I think Jules Lemaître's point about Duse not playing Marguerite *just* as a noisy courtesan is groundless; in the play, in the preface, and in the NOVEL which Dumas wrote before the play, Marguerite is described as an *exceptional* woman in the *demi-monde*; also the text of the play bears out her falling in love with Armand *at once*. How could there be time in a play for slower gradations? Sarah played it like that, too.

(8) Duse couldn't play Phèdre or Fédora: she is not a great actress. I don't think it follows. She could do other things. She could play

La Locandiera
La Gioconda
Une Visite de Noces

better than any one, and though I don't like admitting it, in *La Femme de Claude* she beat Sarah on her own ground. Brewster, a fervid admirer of Sarah, first told me this and I didn't believe it. When Archer wrote an article in *The World* saying Duse had wiped Sarah's fine performance out of his mind I remember being angry. Then I saw Duse play it and I agreed with him. The performance was a more living, vibrating thing.

Yours
 MAURICE BARING

This has taken me hours to write.

Jan. 12 Sunday. Jock wires me from Beaconsfield, where he contrives to be at once *couchant* and *rampant*, to remind me that round about now is Coquelin's centenary. I saw that great actor four times only : *L'Anglais tel qu'on le parle* at the Casino at Dieppe ; *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, in which he was superb ; *Cyrano de Bergerac*, the last act of which left me completely unmoved ; with Réjane in *La Montansier*.

Not much here to expand into two full-dress articles, but I shall doubtless manage somehow. Shall probably fill in with the story of Coquelin's 1887 visit. After setting up a Gringoire in direct contradiction to Tree's ballad-monger, minimising the starving poet's dignity and accentuating his buffoonery, Coquelin tackled Erckmann-Chatrian's *Le Juif Polonais*, well-known to English playgoers as *The Bells*. This set all London by the ears, and the papers came as near to being rude as consideration for a distinguished visitor permitted : " The authors of the play may not have imagined such a fury-haunted wretch as Mr Irving's Mathias, but still less did they intend their burgomaster to be the comfortable, eupeptic individual presented by Coquelin." In an interview next morning the actor said that he had seen Irving's performance and admired it, but held it to be out of keeping with the intentions of the authors as evinced when the play was produced under their direction. He pointed out that the last line, " Quel malheur ! un si brave homme ! " was perfectly appropriate to his own easy-going, lethargic peasant, but made nonsense when applied to Irving's creature of despair.

Leo writes : " At the Goldschmidts' last night heard a young Polish pianist, Alexis Kligerman. Beethoven good intellectually plus some Slav ferocity. Chopin lacked the lyric quality. Ended with pyrotechnics that left me gasping. Imaginative pedalling, amazing rhythm, inclined to force tone. Twenty-one. Should go far." Praise from Sir Hubert is nothing. Praise from Old Sourpuss is praise indeed.

Jan. 18 Monday. Talked to the Playhouse company about *Hedda Gabler*. Have arranged to insert a leaflet in the programme of *Housemaster* to-night and every other night this week. A very imposing affair, four pages long, with the heading in bright red, " TAKE THIS HOME ! "

Jan. 14 Only two copies of the leaflet were found on the floor
Tuesday. after the performance last night, showing that the audience had obeyed my injunction. Query: Is the vulgar thing that works better than the exquisite thing that doesn't? This is a matter for the highbrows: I made up my mind about it years ago.

Jan. 15 Julian d'Albie has roped me in to help with the
Wednesday. production, in which he plays Judge Brack. My first shot at anything of the kind, and I find it very exciting. Full of problems, since the cast must be got *out of the company as it is* without any intrusion of guest-artists. Which means that since most of them are playing against their personalities, they have got to *act*. After some hours I got rid of much of d'Albie's charm, which is too genial, and got him to replace it by the cold suavity of your man of the world. Contrived, too, to persuade handsome John Byron's Eilert Lövborg not to look at his first entry as though he had just made a century in the Varsity Match. Mrs Elvsted, generally flaxen, is to be played by a dark-browed girl who looks like a gipsy. As she acts the part most sensitively I am not going to have it ruined by a wig which would turn her into a platinum-blond Jewess. So Mrs Elvsted remains dark which, since Hedda has Titian-red tresses, makes nonsense of the latter's remark about Thea's "irritating hair." But it's the lesser of two evils.

Jan. 17 Greatly shocked by the death of Archie Macdonell.
Friday. In London I had not known him very well, but here at Oxford we have been thrown together quite a lot. He paid me many little attentions, but then he went out of his way to be kind to everybody. There was a paradoxical dandyism about this huge, virile Scot, and at the railway station in the mornings he would stride along the platform with his red carnation smiling and his glasses frowning. His mere presence banished dullness.

Jan. 18 Went to town yesterday to see Donald Wolfit's
Saturday. tercentenary performance of Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*. Wolfit has everything a great actor should have except classic features. As Othello, for example, he

looks like a golliwog. Jock declares he is the best Shylock he has seen, and I say the same about his Falstaff, judging by the *Merry Wives* embodiment which he plays in a lovely shade of Matisse pink, or like Miss Mitford's description of her father in his vermilion eighties. Yesterday he had made himself up to look like a sentimental French postcard, in spite of which he was very fine, and in the death scene immensely moving.

Jan. 19 Stayed the night at Fairfax Road. Completely quiet.
Sunday. Took Pavia to lunch. When I told him that Jock and I held Liszt's B minor Sonata to be noisy rubbish, he said, "You're wrong, James. Some of it is quiet rubbish!" And he reminded me that when Liszt played it to Brahms the latter fell asleep, for which Liszt never forgave him.

Got back in time for the dress-rehearsal of to-morrow's play, much of which was a shambles. Consolated myself with the lovely dresses Tony Holland has designed and made for Hedda. The first is a white silk morning wrapper, the kind of thing Sarah would have worn as Théodora. The second is a snaky thing in greenish gold. The third is a black satin which, with Pamela Brown's Titian-red hair, is pure Yellow Book. The first dress, the white one, is the most ravishing thing I have ever seen on any stage. They tell me that I must not judge Pam by her performance to-night, that she needs an audience, when she takes fire in all sorts of unexpected ways. I have arranged that she uses her reception at her first entry to stand stock-still and survey the Tesman lay-out with icy disfavour. Am having the last scene between Hedda and Brack played almost in a whisper (a) because of the presence of Tesman and Mrs Elvsted who are not supposed to overhear, and (b) because if the players have done their job they can afford to sit still and let the audience act the scene for them. And now all I can do is to sit still and wait for to-morrow.

Jan. 30 When I got home after the first night of *Hedda*
Thursday. *Gabler* I found my houseboy Charlie sitting up for me with his calling-up paper in his hand. As this was Monday night and he had to report at Blackpool on Thursday, I had only two days to move back to London all my belongings and some three hundred books accumulated at

Oxford. Being alone is my worst phobia, and I just could not stay at Oxford by myself, while getting anybody from this vile town to fill Charlie's place was unthinkable. Logically, of course, one ought to compare the so-called amenities of Oxford with the conditions in, say, Warsaw. But this doesn't work when you must trudge to the station on foot at eight o'clock in the morning, with a cutting wind blowing, and the necessity of stopping every ten yards to get your breath. How Charlie's patience has stood it I don't know; the boy has been wonderful. It has been impossible to get a taxi even by ordering it the day before, and towards the end of my stay I have found myself hailing any stray cab and riding round in it for no reason at all. I am therefore back again at the Villa Volpone, where I am rejoined by Charlie back from Blackpool on calling-up leave. The performance of *Hedda* was, I think, a success, but the rush of leaving Oxford has driven it from my mind.

Jan. 31 Have received another letter from Maurice Baring :
Friday.

The Island
Beaulieu
Inverness

28. 1. 41

How nice of you to write to me. A. B. Walkley said of *Une Visite*, "It stinks in the nostrils of the Philistines but the strength of the fumes does not blind me to the power of the etching." (1892. *Playhouse Impressions*.)

Re Duse's Tanqueray he said: "Imagine such an orchidaceous creature in Surrey! She would soon have set the whole county by the ears!" Or words to that effect.

S. could do Tragedy and Comedy. Could D.? She could be *tragic*. What I think eluded her was *poetry* and she had no voice for verse. Her Cleopatra was paltry, except the Messenger scene. I was told her finest part was in *L'Autre Danger* (Maurice Donnay?). I never saw it. Is tragedy more difficult than comedy, *haute comédie*?

Nozze di Figaro = *Tristan* or *Fidelio*?

I should say a supreme Alceste = a supreme Hamlet.

They say Garrick excelled in both. Sarah certainly could have and did so far as she went, though some people say she sacrificed comedy to melodrama and that the world lost its

supreme comedian. Nobody could be so *funny*. She once played in the *Précieuses Ridicules*. She was wonderful but hadn't learnt the part.

Yours
M. B.

Feb. 2 Here, in the *Observer*, is Ivor Brown on *Hedda Sunday. Gabler* :

At Oxford there has not, I believe, been a new play for a year or so, and the business, as I saw, is grand. Also the quality of the acting. This is a first-rate company, which ought not to be spending all its time on the 'repertory' treadmill. Its *Hedda Gabler* was an adventure, if not a novelty, and it was justly given the public's eager support. Were I a dramatist I should be very happy to have my leading feminine part 'created' by Miss Pamela Brown, whose Hedda was much spoken of—and rightly so.

She gave that lady rather less than the usual weight and sense of grandeur. When Mrs Pat was Hedda she seemed to be the daughter not only of General Gabler but of the entire Norwegian War Office: Miss Brown's Hedda might only be the daughter of a half-pay major. But, taking the great rôle a little lightly, she gave it an admirable sense of humour, which the heavier Heddas usually miss. She held the stage triumphantly, in speech or silence, with a beautifully firm picture of all Hedda's pretentious self-martyrdom and third-rate æsthetic posturings, as well as of the devouring jealousy and fever of possession.

And here is Jock in the *Manchester Guardian* :

In a recent volley of witty abuse Mr Agate told Oxford that it had no taste and did not deserve its excellent repertory theatre. The theatre itself responded last week with a production of Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*, and Oxford took up the challenge and filled the theatre at every performance. "The best business since we did *Baa, Baa, Black Sheep*, though I think it's a rum sort of show myself," was the remark of a lady behind the theatre-bar on Saturday night. It is an open secret that Mr Agate lent an active hand in this production. Certainly the result was something far better than we look to find in a theatre which stages a different play each week. There was a good Lövborg, an excellent Judge Brack, and a delightful Tesman. But, far more important than any of these or than the general tone and style of the presentation,

was a notable new Hedda by Miss Pamela Brown. She is a young actress of rare quality. Her first act is not so telling as that of the last good Hedda, Miss Forbes-Robertson. The producer or assistant-producer ought to have told her that she was a shade too quick with her cues throughout this act. She has other technicalities to learn. But the portrayal gains greatly in momentum as it proceeds; it has exquisite grace of attitude, and it conveys an amazing amount of Hedda's mockery, cruelty, subtlety, and electrical force.

Both Jock and Ivor stress the lightness of this Hedda. It was intentional. One day at rehearsal I asked Pam to give me a little more. She said, "But I'm only twenty-two. I shan't be able to give what you want till I'm thirty-two, and I'm not going to force it." I said, "Very well. We'll build the whole performance up to twenty-two and no more." And so it was.

Feb. 11 He would be a spiritless creature whose heart was *Tuesday*. not uplifted by the stature, bulk, and big assemblance of the lady who, in the team of Forsythe, Seamon, and Farrell, makes her entry pushing a grand piano before her. Madame Seamon is a Gargantuan joy, a delirium of obesity. She is not content to be fat and stay fat; she turns fatness to commodity. Her partner Forsythe treats us to a saga about a man's feelings on losing his chum, the mate of long standing who, when they were both toddlers, refused to let his friend drown:

Though you couldn't swim
You jumped right in. . . .

Perhaps the thing I most admired about Seamon was the *gravity with which she endured and even helped to provide an accompaniment to this drivel*. But *WHAT* a whoop did she emit the moment it was over; the whale eructing Jonah can have been nothing to it.

Perfect contrast was provided by Mr Charlie Kunz, described as "Radio's Wizard of the Piano." On the principle, one supposes, of being heard and not seen, and even then very, very little heard. For Mr Kunz specialises in *pianissimos* that Pachmann never dreamed of. With the lid of the piano down, the popular songs about Moonlight avenues, Mocking-bird lanes, and Berkeley Square nightingales become ditties of no tone. There is no attempt to do anything with these simple tunes, to

fantasticate them, or give them a new colour. They are just played very, very softly, and after every half-dozen or so the executant gets up from his stool and makes a contrite little bow.

My old friend Fred Emney might reasonably complain of having to follow Kunz and Seamon, for he, too, plays the piano, and has certain pretensions to girth. There is about this comedian a nice blend of admirable and historic qualities—the courtesy of a Chesterton, the disdain of a Chesterfield, and the breezy *bonhomie* of the type whose spirituous home is Leicester Square. In our grandfathers' day the only book Fred Emney could conceivably have perused was *Mogg's Ten Thousand Cab Fares*, always provided he could have borrowed it from Mr Sponge; in our fathers' time he would have found his intellectual stimulus in *The Pink 'Un*. Whether he knows it or not this is a wonderful study of grandeur toppling into decadence. Beau Brummell in exile, Balzac's Maxime de Trailles buried in some distant province, Sir Toby keeping his fallen day about him—this beautiful player marshals before the mind's eye the half-pathetic, wholly grotesque cavalcade.

Feb. 14 A carpet divided Gilbert and Sullivan; Jock and I
Friday. have split over a typewriter. After eighteen weeks of
 release from the damned thing—all the time I was at
Oxford—he finds he cannot return to the old drudgery. I should
have foreseen this. He was with me fourteen years, five months,
and some odd days.

Feb. 22 Shelter installed in basement at Fairfax Road.
Saturday. Roughly seven feet long by five feet wide by five
 feet high. Slept in it last night and very com-
fortable. The outdoor shelter is and remains flooded.

Feb. 28 Here are my labours during the three weeks I was
Sunday. ballet critic to the *Sunday Times*.

INTAGLIO

Turning on my wireless the other evening, I found that the one strain available under Heaven was a dance tune entitled *Seven Beers with the Wrong Woman*. The work of a second to

shut off this horror, of a minute to find the book to banish the low thing. This was *Les Petites Cardinal* by Halévy. And who are these little ladies? They are members of the corps de ballet of the Paris Opera in the 'sixties. It was, however, not to their adventures that I turned but to the tale of the frigate *Penelope*. And what, pray, continues my inquisitor, have French frigates to do with ballet dancers? Perpend, O impatient one!

This tale sets forth how a Paris banker lost his heart to a *rat de l'Opéra*—Balzac's word—who would have none of him because she too had lost her heart. The banker's wife decided to join her suit to her husband's. But the young woman insisted on remaining faithful to *le petit Noël de la Ville-Gris*, lieutenant de vaisseau. *Quoi faire?* The wife found the solution. She said to her husband: "Are you not deputy? Have you not supported the Government in and out of season for ten years? Have they ever had to bother about you? Very well, let them start bothering now. Let them send their precious lieutenant to some place where he will have something better to do than make eyes at ballet dancers."

A week later the frigate *Penelope* is on her way to Mozambique. Hear how in the middle of the dog watch the doting officer apostrophises his absent Rosinette: "The smoke grows thin, my beloved, and where it was thickest there is now a luminous space, and in this space appears my darling in the costume she wears in *Giselle*. The steam in the boilers turns into an airy music whose cadence is soft and gentle; it is the waltz from *Giselle*. Even the smoke from the funnels dissolves into a silver forest with a tiny lake in the middle, and on the lake are water-lilies. And you, my adored one, you are moving among the lilies, *sur les pointes*, in your muslin skirt, with bare shoulders, and roses in your hair. Before this vision I am in ecstasy. But alas, I must break off. The order has come to empty the coal-bunkers. . . ."

My notion of ballet dancing is the same as that of this young lieutenant de vaisseau. . . . Next I take down my Laforgue and read this charming fragment from *Le Miracle des Roses*. "Why is the world not made in comic-opera mould? Why is it not modelled on the English waltz *Myosotis*, much played that year at the Casino (my miserable self huddled in a corner), this waltz of studied melancholy like happiness drawing to an end? O gloves, never, never to be benzined into their former freshness!" It was in this demoded mood that I went to see the Sadler's Wells Ballet in a phrenetically modern eccentricity by Mr Frederick Ashton entitled *The Wanderer*, fitted to, and presumably intended to interpret, Schubert's great piano piece. Let it be said at once that this was not written for dancing and was

not intended to be danced, whence it follows that its author must now be turning in his grave with Beethoven, Berlioz, Brahms, and Tschaikowsky.

The cracked and crazy notion of thinking you can make a new art by taking an old one and grafting on to it something that does not and never can belong to it will never, in my view, be better exposed than in this ballet, and by the asking of the simple question: Had the two pianos been dumb, would a jury, consisting of say Toscanini, Sir Thomas Beecham, Sir Henry Wood, Sir Hamilton Harty, and Messrs Basil Cameron and Jack Hylton, have deduced the composer from the antics of the dancers? No. I feel that they would have scribbled on their voting papers Beethoven, Delius, Wagner, Berlioz, Sibelius, and Cole Porter. If this is thought to be an exaggeration, will anybody maintain that all of these distinguished musicians would, without hesitation, have written down "Schubert"? I hold that a single dissentient, the mere tentative pencilling of, say, Schumann's *Etudes Symphoniques*, would blow the gaff about the interpretation of ear-fodder by 'eye-fodder. "If any bores," wrote Montague, "surpass those who try to thrill you with verbal accounts of pictures and pieces of music, it must be the painters who try to do the same to you by painting Hamlet at the play, or Saint Cecilia in full blast at one of her own compositions." Montague did not live to see Donne's *Pseudo-Martyr* or even Hardy's comparatively pellucid *Jude the Obscure* turned into ballet-fodder. *Ça viendra*.

However, it is good fun to see Mr Helpmann sprawl on the ground agonising (because of his phobias?), or watch him being dragged round the stage like Hector at the tail of his conqueror's horse (by his inhibitions?) with Miss Fonteyn in prune-coloured tulle pointing upward. But of Schubert, or perhaps I should say *my* Schubert, not so much as a finger-nail. And if Mr Ashton maintains that this is *his* Schubert I shall have nothing to say. The ballet is pretty and exciting to look at, and if it conveys nothing to me in terms of meaning, Schubert's or another's, it is because I hold, and will always hold, that ballet is powerless to *interpret*, and must be content with simple miming and being its sensuous, complicated, and unmeaning self.

My first and, I vow, last straying into the by-paths of ballet criticism has brought me an entertaining crop of letters. A gentleman from Lichfield writes:

Have you ever been to the Queen's Hall? Yes, of course you have. And haven't you cursed those people who will insist on beating time, waving their hands, wagging their

heads, and generally fidgeting while the music is in progress ? Yet this irritating behaviour only shows that some form of gesture and movement is the natural reaction of thousands of people to every kind of music. I freely confess that in the privacy of the home when playing the gramophone, or listening to the wireless, I often indulge in these antics myself ; striding the while fiercely up and down the room. Great music makes one want to get up and do things, and not just stay sitting in an armchair smoking a foul old pipe, drinking whisky, and priggishly reading the score in an old pair of carpet slippers. Can you honestly say that you are immune from this choreographic instinct ?

I can. As Johnson might very well have said to Boswell : " Sir, dancing is the pastime of a bear. No man would indulge in saltatory antics who was sensible to public cachinnation."

My correspondent goes on :

The *Wanderer* ballet is not meant to represent Schubert or anybody else except Mr Ashton, who expresses himself not in paint, words, or crochets and quavers, but in the fascinating movements so brilliantly executed by Mr Helpmann, Miss Fonteyn, and the others. You say the composer will turn in his grave. Very likely. It only shows his total ignorance of one of the most elementary facts about all kinds of music, which is that it makes most human beings want to get up and dance.

I have no answer to this. If Mr Ashton tells me through his chief dancer that the opening bars of Schubert's piece make him feel like a tic-tac man at Ally-Pally—and that is how Mr Helpmann's miming told me Mr Ashton was feeling—what can I say ?

A correspondent from Tonbridge chides me :

As an innocent in the art of dramatic criticism I cannot very well presume to question your treatment of *Dance Reverie* (or any other stage dreams), but I am wondering whether a man or woman of average intelligence planning a visit to Sadler's Wells is not entitled to a somewhat clearer picture of the ballet that is being performed there. Highbrow, academic criticism is all very well if there are enough highbrows to make it worth while, but I venture the suggestion that those readers who studied closely your *Dance Reverie* are very little better informed than when they first turned to the page.

Come, come. I suggested that readers made discovery of two exquisite little works, one by Halévy and the other by Laforge.

But suppose I had given a clearer—by which I suppose is meant a more technical—picture of the proceedings at Sadler's Wells. Suppose I had modelled my account on the programme annotator who will write :

The opening bars show the composer's mind to be working in the neighbourhood of C sharp minor, which, however, modulates into the key of A flat. Hardly has the first subject died away than a second theme hints at E minor, after which we have coquettings with the sister key of G. The warring tonalities debate the matter for a time, victory resting with neither, a Sitwellian envoi bringing the movement to an end in the no man's land of C flat.

Here goes, then.

At the rise of the curtain the Wanderer is seen tackling six *entrechôtes* followed by a dozen *tournedos*. The *châteaubriant* is interrupted by the Helpmeet, whose advent turns the *pas seul* into a *pas de deux*. A *chasse royale*, followed by twenty-five rapid *brochettes*, leads to a quieter mood in which the corps de ballet, now seen for the first time, executes a delicious series of *mignardises* and *petits fours*. But the respite is not long, and presently, with a *timbale* followed by a *risotto*, the *déjeuner à la fourchette* is in full swing again.

Would my correspondent have derived much illumination from a description of this sort, with "entrechat" substituted for "entrecôte," and so on? I doubt it.

The letter which pleased me most was from a lady who wanted to know the end of Halévy's story about the poor *lieutenant de vaisseau*. (The reader may remember that he was sent with his ship to Mozambique to facilitate the flirtation of an elderly banker with a little ballet dancer who, so long as her gallant sailor was about, had no eyes for elderly gentlemen.) The dénouement, dear lady, illustrates the truth set forth in the old Scottish ballad :

Woman's heart is writ in water,
Woman's faith is writ in sand.

The banker's gallantries prospered to such an extent that he recovered both his appetite and his business acumen. "Nous avons rattrapé l'emprunt de Madagascar, et même les cent cinquante mille francs de l'affaire de Turquie," says his wife. To cut a long story short, the *Penelope* was kept away for six years, and when she finally returned home the dancer discovered that she no longer loved her sailor.

"Ce n'est pas à cause de mon banquier que je te renvoie," she told the poor lieutenant—yes, he was still a lieutenant—"Raynald n'est pas un homme qu'on puisse aimer. J'aime une autre personne. Qui ça ? Ah ! cela, mon cher, c'est mon affaire et mon secret." So they kissed and parted, and that evening the dancer confessed to the banker that she had given her lover—the one that Raynald knew about—his congé. "Qu'est-ce que vous voulez ? J'ai fini par m'habituer à vous." Next day Raynald "achetait pour Rose, avenue de l'Impératrice, un petit hôtel de trois cent mille francs."

There may be a moral to this story in English. There is none in French.

Farewells, as every prima donna knows, are easier said than made. Reluctant though I am to appear again on the scene of ballet, I feel that I must make one more appearance out of courtesy to a lady who writes me a long and interesting letter from Teignmouth. It has this passage :

You say that ballet is powerless to interpret ; but you do not say what it is to interpret. Is it powerless to interpret music ? I do not think so. You cannot deny that Mr Ashton has successfully interpreted Liszt's music in *Dante Sonata* ; and I venture to maintain that this ballet is one of the finest interpretations of one of the deepest problems of human life, the problem of suffering. This work was probably inspired by the rape of Poland ; and which of us to-day can deny the validity of Mr Ashton's conclusion—that, though evil may not ultimately triumph, good as well as evil is crucified and slain in the struggle ? It is Shakespeare's thesis in *King Lear*.

Unwittingly, I suspect, the lady makes my point for me. Liszt fastened his piece on to a reading of Dante. Whence it follows that anything on the stage which looks Dantesque can be said to be a dance-interpretation of that piece. Similarly, your Napoleonic hotch-potch may be deemed an interpretation of the *Eroica* Symphony. Some sort of apology may be made for dancing symphonic poems like Strauss's *Heldenleben* or Sibelius's *Pohjola's Daughter*, which have declared programmes. What I deny is the power of dancing to interpret abstract works like Beethoven's Hammerklavier Sonata or the Brahms B flat Piano Concerto. To add dancing, under whatever pretext, to music not written to be danced, whether programme or abstract, is in my view a gross and unforgivable impertinence. The adding of anything at all to a work of art implies that the work is not complete in itself. I see no difference in heinousness

between making a ballet out of the Choral Symphony and rigging up a tune for Wordsworth's *Intimations of Immortality*.

My correspondent goes on: "When you say that ballet must be content with simple miming you seem to contradict your later assertion that ballet is 'complicated.'" Not at all! Let me refer the lady to the ballet of *The Indian Savage and the Maiden*:

The savage, becoming ferocious, made a slide towards the maiden; but the maiden avoided him in six twirls, and came down at the end of the last one upon the very points of her toes. This seemed to make some impression upon the savage for, after a little more ferocity and chasing of the maiden into corners, he began to relent, and stroked his face several times with his right thumb and four fingers, thereby intimating that he was struck with admiration of the maiden's beauty. Acting upon the impulse of this passion, he—the savage—began to hit himself severe thumps in the chest, and to exhibit other indications of being desperately in love, which being rather a prosy proceeding, was very likely the cause of the maiden's falling asleep; whether it was or no, asleep she did fall, sound as a church, on a sloping bank, and the savage perceiving it, leant his left ear on his left hand and nodded sideways to intimate to all whom it might concern that she *was* asleep, and no shamming. Being left to himself, the savage had a dance all alone. Just as he left off the maiden woke up, rubbed her eyes, got off the bank, and had a dance all alone too—such a dance that the savage looked on in ecstacy all the while, and when it was done plucked from a neighbouring tree some botanical curiosity, resembling a small pickled cabbage, and offered it to the maiden, who at first wouldn't have it, but, on the savage shedding tears, relented. Then the savage jumped for joy; then the maiden jumped for rapture at the sweet smell of the pickled cabbage. Then the savage and the maiden danced violently together, and, finally, the savage dropped down on one knee and the maiden stood on one leg upon his other knee; thus concluding the ballet, and leaving the spectators in a state of pleasing uncertainty whether she would ultimately marry the savage or return to her friends.

I submit that the miming here is simple, while six twirls ending *sur les pointes* are what I mean by complication.

Note, too, dear lady, that even for these primitive antics finality is not claimed. The spectators are left in "a state of pleasing uncertainty." But are they left in a state of pleasing uncertainty when in the *Wanderer* Fantasy Mr Helpmann is



Photo Sydney Newbury

Bust of Sarah Bernhardt by Herself



The Sculptress

dragged round the stage by his hair? No! They are told that that, and nothing else, is what Schubert meant at the top of page four. I think, by the way, that Sadler's Wells might do worse than revive this Crummles ballet. Mr Helpmann would be grand in Mr Folair's part of the savage, while Miss Fonteyn would look delicious in the Infant Phenomenon's "white frock with tucks up to the knees, short trousers, sandalled shoes, white spencer, pink gauze bonnet, green veil, and"—no, not curl-papers! One feels that Miss Ninetta Crummles discarded these for the actual performance.

I hope I have now made clear what I mean by dancing which is at once "simple and complicated." It was in the execution of a simple piece of miming that Mrs Crummles went through the complicated motions of standing on her head on the butt-end of a spear surrounded with blazing fireworks. "You astonish me," said Nicholas Nickleby. "*She* astonished me!" returned Mr Crummles. "Such grace coupled with such dignity!" I transcribe the heavenly thing partly for the sheer joy of setting down the words and partly because I am persuaded that all our balletomanes have not between them read a line of Dickens. If they had, their sense of humour would prevent them from maintaining that three pirouettes and a twiddle are an "interpretation" of the opening bars of *Le Carnaval Romain*. As things are, and since choreographers cannot be serious without entirely losing their sense of humour, I look forward to seeing the Crummles ballet presented as an "interpretation" of Schubert's *Death and the Maiden*.

Feb. 26 Dined at one of the smartest houses in London
Wednesday. —what a snob I am!—with the officers of a balloon barrage, and subsequently lectured to the boys in the cellar. Divided the talk into three parts—stories, an account of Jack Sheppard's last escape, and a reading from Stevenson on the British admirals. Went quite well.

March 4 A lady wrote to me one day last week to say she
Tuesday. had been the purchaser at the sale of Mrs Patrick Campbell's effects of a bronze head of Sarah Bernhardt designed by Sarah as an inkstand and given by her to Mrs Pat. All the effects had been put into a miscellaneous sale and were not catalogued in any detail, nobody was there, there was no mention of Sarah as the sculptor, the Jew dealers didn't

seem to have heard of Mrs Pat, with the result that my correspondent had secured this unique thing, with which were included two vases and a blotter, for ten shillings, and would I like to have it? This afternoon the lady came to tea, and turned out to be that excellent actress Sybil Carlisle.

The bronze is an exquisite piece of work. Sarah has portrayed herself as a bat with wings and claws. An admirable likeness complete with tousled mop and the collarette she always wore. The shoulders carry masks of Tragedy and Comedy. Size fourteen inches by twelve, signed "Sarah Bernhardt" and dated 1880. Deliciously French, Sarah having made a hole in the head to carry a quill. I have followed her intentions, and the figure now wears a plume as she did in *Le Passant*.

March 5 From a letter: "I have read Egos One to Four
Wednesday. in rapid succession. Do hurry up with Five.
Until this comes out life will be unbearable in
Southern Rhodesia."

March 11 The worst speech that I ever heard made by a man
Tuesday. of parts was made by the late Johnston Forbes-
Robertson. He was replying to the toast of Art
with a capital A, and his speech was devoted to a comprehensive
damning of modern painting with particular reference to
Cézanne, Picasso, and Matisse, who, he averred, could all draw
but wouldn't. I was glad no foreigner was present. The next
worst speech I ever heard was delivered by Fred Terry in reply
to the toast of the Drama, where the recipients of the moral lash
were Ibsen, Shaw, Brieux, Sudermann, Strindberg, and the entire
post-Dumasian school. Both actors spoke out of the depth of
their honest hearts and the silliness of their honest convictions.
Julia Neilson, whose autobiography, *This for Remembrance*, I
have been reading, has not fallen into this age-old trap. She
sees that the plays for which she and her husband were famous,
the Wardour Street drama of romantic claptrap, of balderdash
ever more dashing in situation as it becomes balder in idea—
Julia sees that these Nells and Pimpernels, Henrys of Navarre,
Borderers and Whatnot, bore as much or as little relation to the
art of drama as the ballad concert bears to the art of music. And
she puts up a defence which is so completely honest that it wins

respect—the defence of the tailor who sells thirty-shilling raincoats because there is a demand for raincoats costing thirty shillings. And this, of course, is superb: “In 1914 war broke out; prices kicked the beam; and, from another point of view, Fred and I, still playing ‘the same old stuff,’ in some way stood for stability in a world that had suddenly become unstable.” Meaning, of course, that to the vast majority of playgoers in these islands Dorothy o’ the Hall will always be a more compelling character than Lady Macbeth, Phèdre, Hedda Gabler, Madame Ranevsky, Candida, or Elizabeth Barrett. I think it is in the play about Dorothy that Lady Vernon receives unexpectedly early news of the Battle of Marston Moor. Asked how she managed this, she answers: “I bade my gossip come hot-foot i’ the morn.” And that, of course, is what brings your English audience hot-foot i’ the evening. Assembled, such audiences demand that the tosh shall be magnificently played. And both Fred and Julia were magnificent players. He had one rival—Lewis Waller; she had none, nor could have had any. “Remember, If e’er thou look’dst on majesty,” said Shakespeare’s Cleopatra. Julia had majesty and to spare, doubled with a hoyden quality lost to the stage since Mrs Jordan. For fifty years she queened and romped it by turns, and sometimes both together. Like another Shakespearean character she may be said to have gone down to the theatre in a galliard and come home in a coranto.

March 12 Mark Hambourg said to me to-day, “Reading *Wednesday*. Schumann last night, I came across his discovery of Chopin’s Opus 2, the ‘La ci darem’ Variations. It gave me a thrill.” The first time I read Balzac I was struck by an allusion in *César Birotteau* to the *eight* symphonies of Beethoven. The date of the novel is 1837, which shows either that the Ninth Symphony took more than thirteen years to reach Paris, or that Balzac slipped up. Actually he did slip up—the Choral Symphony was given performances at the Paris Conservatoire in 1832 and 1834, half at the beginning and half at the end of the concert. The thing which gives what I call the “contemporary” thrill its excitement is the *casualness* of the reference, which means that the Diarists are the best hunting-ground. My favourite, so to speak, “personal” example, which

I regard as a collector's piece, is a sentence in a letter written in 1779 by the author of *The Road to Ruin* to Mr Richard Hughes : " We have a new afterpiece of Mr Sheridan's coming out this evening, *The Critic*, from which we expect great things."

Dipping into Fanny Burney's early Diary the other day I find a reference to her sister Charlotte, whom she reports as saying, " Splitt me if I'd not a hundred times rather be spoken to by Mr Garrick than His Majesty, G—d bless him ! " It is Charlotte who tells how, at the end of the second act of *The Merchant of Venice*, a gentleman climbed over two boxes to ask Garrick, then in his retirement, what he thought of the Shylock. Quick as lightning Garrick replied, " Oh, Sir, I'm no judge ! " Dramatic critics should make a note of this as a perfect answer to the gushful and pestiferous women who come up to them after the first act of a new play and ask them what they think of it.

Something akin is this entry in the *Journal des Goncourt* for December 28 in the year in which I was born :

Yesterday at Bing's, the seller of Japanese goods, I saw a long woman, very pale, wrapped up in an endless waterproof, moving everything about, putting everything out of its place, and from time to time placing an object on the ground and saying, " This will do for my sister." It is curious how this Sarah Bernhardt reminded me on this gray and rainy day of one of those elegant convalescents who pass you in a hospital at about five o'clock, in the twilight, to attend prayers at the end of the hall.

Eighteen years later a ceremonial dinner is given to Edmond.

At eleven o'clock Sarah Bernhardt, leaning against the marble fireplace in the drawing-room, reads carelessly, through a lorgnette, in her golden voice, the " Tribute to Edmond de Goncourt," by Robert de Montesquiou.

The point is " carelessly, through a lorgnette." This, I take it, was Sarah's way of getting even with Edmond in the matter of that " endless waterproof."

March 16 My article in the *S.T.* is all about the blight of
Sunday. soundlessness which has descended upon the modern
 actress. " The earliest pipe of half-awakened birds
is a tornado of sound compared with these unheard tweetings.
The worms in Maud's garden made more noise."

March 17 Monday. Have sold two books to Hutchinson's, being re-prints of my best work in the *Daily Express* and *John o' London's* during the last ten years. £150 on account of royalties for the two. From that £150 the sum of £16 for typing has to be deducted, which leaves £134. Of this Stanley Rubinstein bags half for past income tax, which leaves me with a miserable £67, all of which will go in present income-tax, and the onus of writing several thousand words more to make up the length. I feel like Theophilus Cibber, the comedian, who used to advertise his benefit as being "for himself and creditors conjointly." What I am really getting out of this deal is the loan of £67 till the Revenue claims it.

March 19 Wednesday. Some amusing correspondence as the result of Sunday's article.

A well-known Shakespearean actor writes :

You and I, let us hope, would not dare to inflict ourselves on a musical public by performing on a piano or violin (admitting a small facility in the art) without years of study and hard work to get our hand and finger muscles so supple and controlled that they can respond at will to our mental conception of the music. Whereas these young theatre-folk bounce on to and about the boards without any knowledge or previous study of their vocal instrument. A lark can be heard over the green hills and far away whereas five foot of human flesh and blood, equipped with the proper complement of vocal cords, cannot be heard beyond the third row of stalls.

And a distinguished connoisseur and sometime teacher of singing sends me this :

There are many reasons for the present day's complete lack of vocal well-being. Late hours. Endless cheap cigarettes. Perpetual nipping of gin and vermouth instead of a good glass of beer or stout as a healthy stimulant at sensible hours. The frequenting of night-clubs in an appalling atmosphere. High-heeled shoes producing curvature of the spine. Ridiculous, hyper-thin imitation silk stockings on cold, wet days. Being 'got up in' and 'getting through' a couple of numbers instead of learning to produce the voice. The decreasing number of singing-masters of the old school who never allowed pupils to sing in their noses, which inevitably reduces any voice in volume after a time, and not a very long time. The boundless

conceit which induces young stage aspirants of a semi-society type to think they can do without the study of correct elocution under good instructors. The result is these flat-chested miseries who have no room in their wretched frames for their substitutes for lungs. How can sonority be produced when there is nothing and nowhere to produce it from? Even in this short time the ghastly business of crooning 'tew yew' about this and that 'memoree' is reaping its reward, which means taking its inexorable toll.

And this devastating post-card :

The reason the modern actress fails to make herself heard is because she mistakes the theatre for a kitchenette.

March 26 Luncheon-lecture to the women of Wolverhampton. *Wednesday.* When I arranged this I had forgotten that I should be in the middle of the Easter rush, when editors want two weeks' articles in one. The result was that I had to go by car, which cost half my fee. Income tax taking the other half—the Revenue does not understand abnormal expenditure due to pressure of work—I am about £2 'out on the day. Audience wholly uninterested in what I had to say about the great players of the past. The whole visit was a mistake. But then I only undertook it in order to return via Wylde Green, my first visit to the farm since June 24, 1989. Albert has taken beautiful care of the horses. Ego fine. A bomb fell in his field without harming a hair of him, though it blew the window-frames out of the farmhouse a quarter of a mile away. But even Albert's art has not been able to prevent King Neptune from growing up into a hulking commoner. I never really liked him. However he has lashings of action, and his height, which is sixteen hands, may help me sell him, except that nobody is buying anything. As soon as I saw Lady Viking I said, "By'r lady, your ladyship is nearer heaven than when I saw you last, by the altitude of a chopine."

April 14 Here is the story of two old ladies who were trapped *Monday.* in a basement within a hundred yards of the Savage Club and *after ten days* were dug out alive and in good fettle. With trembling hands they had managed to enlarge a hole giving on to the larder. The water was still running.

There were some scraps and some tins of food. There was something worth a million times its weight in rubies—a tin-opener. But there was also darkness. With extraordinary courage they kept themselves alive in what seemed to be eternal night. Then they were rescued. And the remark made by the elder lady should be preserved: "It's nice to see the light!"

April 15 Reading Verlaine's *Parallèlement*, I discovered in *Tuesday*. *Mon Apologie* this moving thing which speaks also for my brother Edward:

J'ai vécu toutes les puissances
Du cœur et de l'esprit bien mûris par l'été
Splendide de bonheur et de l'adversité.

April 18 Letter from Jock to James:
Friday.

The Micawber analogy must at once be dropped, since Mrs M. *never did leave Mr M.* I lately discovered that we are far more like the Gamps—the pre-Chuzzlewit Gamps before Mr G. demised. Mr G., you see, found it in his heart to leave Mrs G. only in the most drastic way possible. That typewriter is, it is true, a good three-fourths of the reason for our severing. But it should be said of Jock and James, as of the Gamps, that "words roge betwixt us on account of the expense." And Jock may now say with Sairey G.: "My earnings is not great, Sir, but I will not be imposed upon."

Reply from James:

MY DEAR JOCK,

So long as they don't liken us to the Smallweeds!

Ever,
J.

In this high spirit should all severances be conducted.

April 21 Tom Lishman, the pianist, having got his C.O. to *Monday*. invite me, I was taken by Army lorry to somewhere near Chatham to talk to some signallers. From a small hill saw a *complete* rainbow. Dined in officers' mess on Army rations. Very good. Discarded my Jack Sheppard stuff, and substituted some Damon Runyon. Result a flop. Stevenson's *English Admirals* also no good. To my horror the only

thing that really went down was some common stuff out of *Agate's Folly*. Tom played them some Liszt, and an oboist from the B.B.C. orchestra some early Italian stuff quite beautifully. Home about 2.30.

April 22 Time will still be flying.
Tuesday.

Gunner D. E. R. of the Canadian Army, pleading Guilty at a Borden court-martial to-day to being absent without leave from March 11 to April 12, was stated to have been absent eight times in just over a year. R. said he had been looking for relations and had found his Aunt Annie in Wimbledon. Then he visited his grandmother and 'time just flew.'

Evening paper

April 24 Talked to some A.A. and B.B. units stationed in
Thursday. an Essex swamp. In view of Shakespeare's birthday, read the last half of *Henry V*, Act IV, Scene I. Nobody moved a finger at the soldier Williams's, "'We died at such a place'; some swearing, some crying for a surgeon, some upon their wives left poor behind them, some upon the debts they owe, some upon their children rawly left." Dined with Colonel Eeles, the C.O. Very charming to me. Home about 1 A.M.

April 26 Last Savage Club Luncheon of the season. Frank
Saturday. Pettingell showed me his scrap-book with this cutting picked up in a junk-shop.

Whereas, on Thursday the 29th Instant, there was taken out of the House of Mrs Elizabeth Tibby, a Baker, in Grub Street a Silver Tankard mark'd T^EM and a Silver Salt mark'd E^TE. Whoever brings them to Mr Jonathan Wild at the King's Head in the Old Baily, shall have Four Guineas Reward for the whole, or proportionable for either, and no Questions ask'd.

April 29 'Phone message from Hutchinson's to say that the
Tuesday. MS. of *Express and Admirable* had been destroyed in the blitz on Plymouth. As I had no copy, the material being contained in two newspaper-cutting books, also

destroyed, I was a little dashed, but recovered quickly on hearing that the *Express* have a copy of everything I have written for them. Will take me some days to put the stuff together again.

May 1 Thursday. Mark Hambourg having offered to give a recital on the Broadwood grand I am housing for the Three Arts Club, I filled my big room with soldiers billeted in my road. Mark was at his most delicate and best, and as one of the boys said afterwards, "'E couldn't 'ave played no better if we was paying for it." One lad from Much Wenlock being of a strappingness to overthrow ten Housmans, I said to Mrs Hambourg with some fatuousness that I supposed he would make some Shropshire lass happy. She replied, "Nonsense. He will make many London ladies unhappy."

May 2 Friday. Told *Express* readers how, sitting at a recent performance of the *Messiah*, I had pondered on the people who could have been present at Handel's funeral in 1759. Johnson, Garrick, Reynolds, Burke, Goldsmith, Boswell—though this last would have had to make a special journey from Scotland, being then at Edinburgh University. Unfortunately, owing to a telegraphist's error, the northern edition of the paper reversed the last two figures of the date, making it 1795. This drew down on me a letter which, after exposing my supposed error, went on, "Dr Johnson in his *Life of Dryden* remarked 'To adjust the minute events of literary history is tedious and troublesome.' But you, Sir, are not Johnson. You have not got scrofula." The letter bore an address in Yorkshire and was signed "James Boswell."

I at once dispatched an explanation and begged the writer to tell me whether his signature was part of his reproof, or whether he was in fact a descendant of the great biographer. There is just a chance that he may be. Boswell had five children: Veronica (b. 1778), Euphemia (b. 1774), Alexander (b. 1775), James (b. 1778), and Elizabeth (b. 1780), besides one son who died in infancy. Of the sons, Alexander, created a baronet in 1821, left an heir, James, who in turn had two daughters—Julia, who did not marry, and Emily, who married the fifth Baron Talbot de Malahide, and by him had James Boswell Talbot, the sixth Baron. The second son, James, died in 1822 unmarried.

Of the daughters, Veronica died at the age of twenty-two and Euphemia at sixty, both, I gather, being unmarried. Elizabeth, in 1799, married her cousin William Boswell, which marriage may have had issue. This is the one possibility that my correspondent is a lineal descendant.

May 3 Saturday. A Jonsonian party at the Villa Volpone. Charlie, who definitely joins the R.A.F. at Blackpool on Thursday, gave a farewell rout to some thirty of his friends. Round about three in the morning the Villa had achieved a creditable likeness to Bartholomew Fair.

May 4 Sunday. Ladies' Luncheon at the Savage Club. Took Gwen Chenhalls. Began my speech: "Wondering this morning what I should say to you, I happened on a Manual of Elocution published some eighty years ago. In it I found this passage, 'Speakers to the Toast of The Ladies often mar their effect by watering down gallantry with facetiousness. This cannot be other than injudicious, since if the humour is poor the ladies will take offence, while if it is good they will not perceive it. The most suitable topic on these occasions is the simple one of Female Beauty, upon which some ten minutes, permissive of many choice expressions, may be spent. Attractiveness in the female is Nature's compensation for the lack of wit, in which connection it may be remarked that while "fragility of intellect" is a pretty phrase, "feebleness of mind" is clumsy.' " I composed this while I was shaving this morning, but it seemed to pass for the genuine thing.

May 5 Monday. Picking up *An Essay on the Character and Influence of the Stage on Morals and Happiness* by John Styles, published in 1807, I find this footnote tacked on to a mention of Shakespeare:

I am sorry that necessity obliges me to mention "Nature's favourite child," our immortal bard, in terms of disapprobation. The magic of his genius, I am free to acknowledge, has often held me in enthusiastic admiration, and, captivated by the charm of glowing sentiment and exquisite poetry which abound in his works, I felt reluctance in classing him with the authors who have contributed to spread immorality and

misery among mankind. But bare-faced obscenities, low vulgarity, and nauseous vice so frequently disfigure and pollute his pages, that we cannot but lament the luckless hour in which he became a writer for the Stage. This it was that degraded and debased the noblest powers that ever distinguished a human being; but for THIS, Shakespeare would never have thus ignominiously descended.

May 6 From a Manual of Etiquette in the 'Forties: "*In Tuesday. the library.* Care should be taken not to place books by authors of different sexes next to each other."

May 7
Wednesday.

As I indicated last year there are occasions (and these do not include those involving academic dress) when the wearing of shorts and slacks is appropriate; but both must be worn with taste. They do not, for instance, combine well with high-heeled shoes or the more elaborate forms of make-up. Oxford in war-time, and the neighbourhood of New Inn Hall Street in particular, houses a less restrained and select population than Hampstead in peace-time. It is urgently desirable that students should not be confused with its less discreet elements. The same consideration suggests, therefore, that farewells to friends outside the Porter's Lodge should be brief to the point of frigidity.

Notice posted in a women's college at Oxford

May 8 Charlie gone. I shall miss him very much. Im-
Thursday. possible to imagine anybody kinder or more attentive.

May 9
Friday.

*Pte. Johnnie Irvine, 4982397,
16th Platoon, "C" Coy, 14th Batt.,
Sherwood Foresters, Lambourn,
Newbury, Berks*

4. 5. 41

DEAR JAMES AGATE,

I lost my much-valued kit-bag library when our billets were destroyed by fire t'other week. It consisted of *Theatre Talks*

(James Agate), *Red and Black* (Stendhal), *The English Constitution* (Walter Bagehot), Creasy's *Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World*, Alex. Woolcott's *While Rome Burns*, Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*, and Baron Corvo's *Hadrian the Seventh*. Any chance of one of your wealthy friends helping me to rebuild same?

Yours sincerely,
JOHNNIE IRVINE (*Pte.*)

My reply :

10 *Fairfax Road*
London, N.W.6
May 9, 1941

DEAR PRIVATE IRVINE,

There are no wealthy friends left ! I send for your acceptance a little book of mine which you may not have seen. Not because I think you are particularly interested in Rachel, but because I happen to have a spare copy and because it is exactly a hundred years since she acted in London. Also my own copy of the *Golden Treasury*.

You may be interested to learn that during the last war I was in camp at Chiseldon as an A.S.C. Supply Officer, and often took my little company of six men route-marching to what a modern poet of the name of Betjeman calls "*leathery Lambourn*"—I presume because of the racing-stables scattered about.

Yours sincerely,
JAMES AGATE

P.S. What on earth is *Hadrian the Seventh* doing in that *galère*?

May 10 To-day is the centenary of Rachel's London début.
Saturday. The play was Racine's *Andromaque* in which she played Hermione. According to Georges d'Heylli the entire English aristocracy was present, which explains why the audience, mistaking Hector's widow for Pyrrhus's young woman, accorded to another actress, Mlle Larcher, the ovation it had intended for the real lioness. Rachel's reputation is as safe as that of Roscius. It is unattackable and will not be attacked, though I have never made much account of Charlotte Brontë's enthusiasm except as a piece of writing. For all I know this may have been the "shy, fiery-eyed little schoolmarm's" one

and only visit to the theatre, in which case she would know as little about acting as our youngest critic. It is the physical description of Rachel which most convinces me of her genius. She was undersized, plain, swarthy, with a head several times too big for her body, a hoarse voice, and a permanent scowl.

Called on Gerald Howe, the publisher, to ask whether he had any copies left of my little *Life* that Arnold Bennett liked so much. He found five copies of the English edition and three of the American, and gave them to me, the book being out of print.

May 11 Last night London had its biggest blitz to date.
Sunday. From my attic window the view was one of beauty and awe. Against the glow of the distant fires the Odeon Cinema and other daytime-ugly buildings at Swiss Cottage stood out like the battlements of Elsinore. I could smell my neighbour's thorn and cherry trees, now in full flower, drenched by the full moon. Presently I heard drops of what in that empty sky could not be water. It was shrapnel, and I wondered what Debussy would have made of this garden under that rain.

May 12 I hear that much of Saturday's damage, which is
Monday. enormous, is owing to Cup-finnalling and week-ending. The defect of the English quality, I suggest. Scores of fires allowed to spread which could have been stopped. The Houses of Parliament hit, also the British Museum. Much more moved by the destruction, all but the walls, of the Queen's Hall. This now presents the appearance of a Roman arena, and should be left as a permanent memorial to Hitler. Overheard to-day at the Ritz: "I'm not a snob, but I thank Heaven there are plenty of common people to clear up the mess."

May 13 Reply from James Boswell, enclosing family tree
Tuesday. showing that he is the great-great-grandson of Boswell's daughter Elizabeth, who married her cousin William Boswell, and therefore great-great-great-grandson of the biographer. A charming letter saying that he is seventeen and at school. Also that he withdraws his rebuke and has rehabilitated my reputation for accuracy wherever possible.

May 16 Friday. Distressed to see that Monty Shearman's great friend, Maurice Ingram, has been killed fire-watching. I remember sitting with him at Lord's one afternoon just before the war, when he complained bitterly of Eden's habit of lecturing foreign potentates as if they were naughty school-boys. During a prolonged shower Maurice talked about his experiences at Rome where he was Counsellor of Embassy, or whatever it's called. He said that Mussolini had been deeply offended, and that a few empty sentences about his greatness, imaginative grasp, eloquence, and drive would have made all the difference. "Eden treats M. as though he were English. He is an Italian and aching to have his vanity played up to." In appearance Maurice was like a highly cultured bear with a soft voice and velvet paws. Not a growl or a scratch in him. When in England he always attended Monty's Christmas dinners, and between them they would find the correct answers to four-fifths of the *Times* General Knowledge paper. Though he was at Cambridge, he had the Balliol manner in a more marked degree even than Monty. He was very knowledgeable about books, music, and pictures, and immensely proud of a Bonnard, I think it was, showing a wet day in Paris with a funeral passing through a lane of umbrellas. Jock liked him very much, and I never resented his conception of me as an amusing *arriviste*. In fact I was an *arriviste* in his circle, and to be thought amusing is always something.

May 18 Sunday. Yesterday I picked up a copy of Octave Mirbeau's *Le Jardin des Supplices*, which I had not looked at for forty years. Sat up half the night reading it, and noted this admirable description of any French politician :

Par des duels appropriés Eugène Mortain fit taire la malveillance qui va chuchotant autour des personnalités nouvelles, et sa naturelle gaité, son cynisme bon enfant qu'on traitait volontiers d'aimable paradoxe, non moins que ses amours lucratives et retentissantes achevèrent de lui conquérir une réputation discutable, mais suffisante à un futur homme de gouvernement qui en verra bien d'autres. Il avait aussi cette faculté merveilleuse de pouvoir, cinq heures durant, et sur n'importe quel sujet, parler sans jamais exprimer une idée. Son intarissable éloquence déversait, sans un arrêt, sans une fatigue, la lente, la monotone, la suicidante pluie du vocabu-

laire politique, aussi bien sur les questions de marine que sur les réformes scolaires, sur les finances que sur les beaux-arts, sur l'agriculture que sur la religion. Les journalistes parlementaires reconnaissaient en lui leur incompétence universelle et miraient leur jargon écrit dans son charabia parlé. Serviable quand cela ne lui coûtait rien, généreux, prodigue même, quand cela devait lui rapporter beaucoup, arrogant et servile, selon les événements et les hommes, sceptique sans élégance, corrompu sans raffinement, enthousiaste sans spontanéité, spirituel sans imprévu, il était sympathique à tout le monde. Aussi son élévation rapide ne surprit, n'indigna personne. Elle fut, au contraire, accueillie avec faveur des différents partis politiques, car Eugène ne passait pas pour un sectaire farouche, ne décourageait aucune espérance, aucune ambition, et l'on n'ignorait pas que, l'occasion venue, il était possible de s'entendre avec lui. Le tout était d'y mettre le prix.

May 24. *The Hood* sunk by the *Bismarck*. Thirteen
Saturday. hundred men killed in a land battle is an incident ;
 a loss at sea of the same dimensions is a tragedy.
The ship acts as proscenium.

May 25 "The pursuit [of the *Bismarck*] still continues."
Sunday. Yes, but will the couple of torpedoes we have put
 into her slow her up enough to let us catch her ?
Everybody doubts it.

May 26 News from Crete bad. Actually considered as book-
Monday. keeping, it would be better to keep Crete and let the
 Bismarck go. But sentiment is all the other way.
Have spoken to several sailors to-day all of whom say, with
complete conviction, "The boys will get her."
Pursuit still on. Hope getting fainter.

May 27 The first intimation I had was looking out of my
Tuesday. window at about twelve-thirty and seeing a sailor
 come down the road, waving his arms and stopping
everybody. "We've got the b——!" he said. Listened to the
one o'clock news and knew it was all right from the excitement
in the announcer's voice.

May 28 America is in the war as near as makes no matter.
Wednesday. Roosevelt is the greatest jockey the human race has known.

May 30 When I was a young man part of the excitement of
Friday. London theatre-going came from the thrill of seeing people better dressed than the inhabitants of my Manchester suburb. What tragic throe, what comic vicissitude would not my boyish soul have been prepared to face fortified by so much shine, sheen, gloss? And then the apartments through which Belgravia's femininity swept, swam, glided! Normally, despite London fogs, more spick and span than my mother's house on our return from the seaside after the summer holiday and the biennial re-decorating. Alas, it is not now with the stage as it hath been of yore. The things which I have seen I now can see no more, and it is not the stage's fault. Dimness is in the eye of the ageing beholder.

Some such thoughts flitted through my mind as I sat watching a performance of *Don't Blush, Girls!* at the Bedford Theatre, Camden Town, to-night. Was some of the *décor* a trifle dingy? But I had driven to the theatre through streets in connection with which "dingy" makes no sense. The revue was described as "adult." This adulthood was not obtrusively noticeable until we came to the *poses plastiques* of a lady clad, like Marlowe's young woman, in the beauty of a thousand stars, but not much else. How close these *poseuses* attain to the art of living statuary and how narrow is the escape from being what Hans Andersen-minded little boys might call ladies without any clothes—these are deep and hidden things, "for ignorance of which, let us trust, we shall not be rebuked, as à Kempis says, at the day of judgment." Montague, from whose essay on the "Principal Girl" I am shamelessly borrowing, would have been the first to see through bathos to ultimate good intention when the lady, donning a black velvet pall, looked down upon a wreath to the strains of the Last Post. And again when, sprouting wings, she grasped and held aloft a vicious-looking dove.

The show at the "Met.," to which I went on afterwards, was definitely less esoteric. If it be the business of revue to comment on current events—which I am quite sure it is—then *Let the Band Play* was quite first-class. There was a shopping scena with



By courtesy of the "Daily Express"

Johnson in the Strand

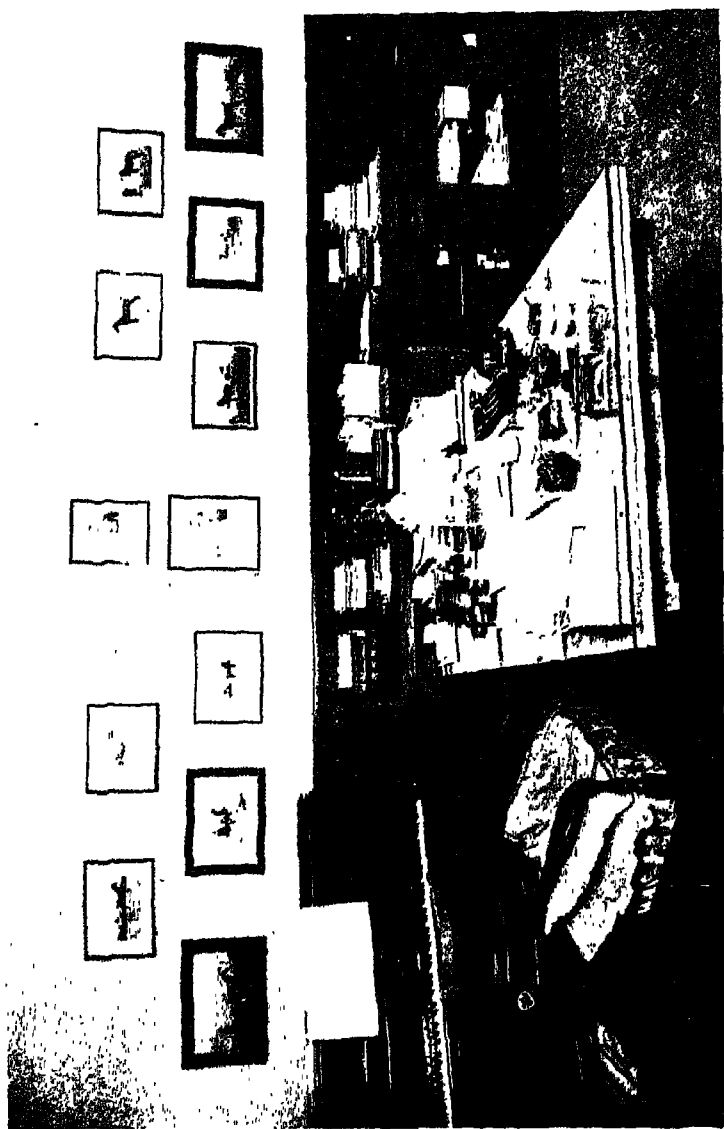


Photo Sport and General

My Study

"Palethorpe's I love" and other Shalimaresque nonsense as the *leitmotiv*. What a clever artist George Lacy is, and how many thousands of pities that nature has denied him a voice! There was an exquisite turn entitled "In a Chinese Garden." Here five tiny Chinese, male and female, but all flower-like, tumbled and juggled effortlessly, happily—a quaint mixture of nostalgia and beatitude. The turn over, the vision faded, and we were once more in the rough and very different tumble of the Edgware Road.

May 31 Sat up late last night writing a long letter to Hugh
Saturday. Walpole, reported by *The Times* as having had a bad heart attack. I have ragged Hugh for years, unmercifully and in print, about being slipshod as a writer, and the letter was an attempt to square accounts as between my affection for him as a friend and the plaguy business of disliking his handling of words.

June 1 Hugh did not live to get my letter. I heard the
Sunday. news over the wireless as I was waiting to begin a broadcast. We had some first-rate rows. In the summer of 1938 I wrote to Hugh offering him space in *Ego 4* to explain why he had forbidden Macmillan's to send his new novel to the *Daily Express*. The letter ended "Come, you old badger, let me draw you." Hugh replied in due course, and there was a long rally, both of us coming up to the net to smash. But when it became necessary to shorten that book, this correspondence had to go. I give Hugh's return of service here :

Perran Bay Hotel
Perranporth
Cornwall
July 24, '38

MY DEAR JIMMIE,

I don't want you to review my books and for two reasons :
 '1. I don't want you to review them because you don't read them. What you do is to open my new book, find a piece of English that isn't *your* English, pick it out, pillory it under your fat caricature in your paper, make a mock or two, and so leave it.

Now, you are a first-class journalist and I always read you with joy, but I can never reconcile your serious, devoted

attitude to the theatre and your flippant, casual patronage of current literature.

I *doubt* if you've ever read a *whole* book by any one right through in your life! Have you? If so, what?

Now, you may be right in your attitude to current literature, but, as *you* know, a book *is* a book to the author of it. One has been a year or more living with it, caring for it, cursing it. Why should one deliver it over to some one who will certainly mock it without reading it? All the same it *would* be so delivered over were it not for the second reason.

2. I have a great regard for our friendship. It has had some ups and downs, but by now I value it for its entertainment value and because I like you. Now, I know that a contemptuous review by you who have *not* read my book will only make me, for a time at least, think you a patronising, job-shirking bastard. Of course you are *not* that, but I, in company with others whom you have mockingly patronised, would for the moment think so. As you are not that I don't want to think you are.

After all this you will think me super-sensitive and cowardly perhaps. I'm *not* cowardly, but I am sensitive where you are concerned—

and am

Your affectionate friend,

HUGH WALPOLE

Magnanimity came naturally to Hugh. Discussing Maugham's *Cakes and Ale*, he said to me, "I shan't forgive Willie easily. The beggar had drunk my claret!"

The reason I found Hugh unreadable is his *inexactness*. "A flock of angels cut the brilliant air like a wave breaking through mist." What would Macaulay have said if Montgomery had perpetrated this simile? Take that last article Hugh wrote:

I will confess that I would sacrifice my life, my books, my possessions, everything except my friends if in exchange I might have written *Alice in Wonderland*, Boswell's *Johnson*, *Wuthering Heights*, the best of Hazlitt's Essays, or Hans Andersen's Fairy Tales, and gone down to history as the author of any one of them. The big banging masterpieces are so beyond me that I can't begin to think of myself as author of them, but Dodgson, Boswell, Hans Andersen, even Dickens, seem within chatting distance.

If this means anything it is that Boswell's *Johnson* and *Pickwick* are not "big banging masterpieces." "My mind floats in

a kind of summer mist," wrote Hugh in *Roman Fountain*. Exactly! Amanda Ros described Delina Delaney as "sister to cloudy confusion." The moment Hugh took up the pen he became brother to that muddled young woman.

Balzac writes somewhere of "L'honnête artiste, cette infâme médiocrité, ce cœur d'or, cette loyale vie, ce stupide dessinateur, ce brave garçon." Heart of gold, soul of loyalty, tried and trusty friend—Hugh was all these, but the rest of Balzac's judgment would not be too severe. His tragedy was that his fine qualities have nothing to do with being a great novelist. With Desmond and all the other critics I may be mistaken about Hugh's final place in English letters. I *know* that he would not have bated a jot of his generosity, of his simple goodness, to gratify his lifelong ambition. He leaves a gap. His steady blue eyes, his willing smile, his resonant voice, his high scorn, his skill in banter, his sense of fun—all these things had become part of the fabric of literary London.

June 2 Yesterday's broadcast was successful, I think. I had *Monday*. been asked to give a miniature concert of recorded music, to last half an hour. Not made easier by the proviso that nothing by any living German or Italian composer should be included; nor any records by German or Italian executants, conductors, or orchestras. The programme, devised after much thought, began with the last half of the Handel-Beecham ballet *The Origin of Design*, after which the Prelude to Moussorgsky's *Khovanstchina*, Moiseiwitsch in No. 18 of Rachmaninoff's *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, the Adagietto from Bizet's *L'Arlésienne* suite, Maggie Teyte singing Duparc's *Phydilé*, the first half of Chabrier's *España*, and back to the note we first thought of, Grainger's *Handel in the Strand*, with which the programme faded out. The idea was that I should be bright and amusing in snatches of talk between the records. The news over-running, I found my eight minutes reduced to six, which meant making the necessary cuts as I was speaking. Brevity may be the soul of wit, but not as the B.B.C. construes it.

I have received a letter from an Australian music-lover and amateur pianist. Somebody had written from London to suggest that X, Y, and Z—all of them pianists of world-wide reputation—might be induced to give a public performance of Godowsky's

arrangement for three pianos of Weber's *Invitation to the Dance*. The Australian replied :

You suggest a performance of the *Invitation* by X, Y, and Z. God protect us, what a trio ! There would be police intervention in the first five minutes. X, a talented vandal who will wring the neck of a bird of Paradise, and fling its twitching corpse at his audience ; Y, a soulless, dandified marionette who sits up like a performing kitten ; I think he wears corsets. He had the brazen impudence when I spoke of Godowsky's *Passacaglia* to sneer at me : Yes, but what is the good of it ? And Z, a carpenter ; just a methodical carpenter and nothing more, and a German carpenter at that. More than twenty years ago I fed him and his old Frau on gorgonzola and Munich beer and champagne from Rheims, and played the Godowsky Sonata to him, but you might as well offer the Koh-i-noor to a game-cock. Still, that unsavoury trio entrusted with the *Invitation* might commit a murder foul enough to win wild plaudits from a holiday audience.

June 5 Lunched at Gwen Chenhalls' with Lady Oxford
Thursday. and Ralph Hill, a large, musically minded man.
Lady O. in great form. Told us a lot of stories about Mussolini. How, receiving her, he wore full Melton hunting-kit, all wrong, with the addition of absurd little bows and ribbons. Strode up and down the porphyry *salon* slapping his boot with a riding whip. "Don't do that !" said Lady O. "Why not ?" "Because I don't like people who hunt indoors !" About Pavlova : "A detestable woman, and an insanely jealous artist."

June 7 Seeing a chink in my blind, one of the new police
Saturday. came in for a chat and some whisky round about
2 A.M. this morning. Told me an extraordinary story of a man found rolling about on the ground clutching his stomach and screaming with pain. Asked what he had swallowed he said, "A fairy cycle," and at the hospital gave the same reply. It seems that the fellow was a busker who swallows scissors, razor-blades, bits of door-knobs, and so forth to amuse theatre crowds. One evening a drunken swell challenged him to eat a bicycle. "Make it a fairy cycle, give me a week and a hundred quid, and you're on !" said the busker. The bargain was struck,

with the proviso that the child's machine should be eaten in front of the swell at his, the swell's, house. On the seventh day the busker had fulfilled his contract all but half the handle-bar, one pedal, and a bit of the chain. However, he did it in the time, and produced the cheque as evidence. Whether he recovered my policeman didn't know.

June 8 I take up most of my too-short space in the *S.T. Sunday*. to-day explaining why I will not go a third time to Emlyn Williams's *The Light of Heart*. I saw this play on its first production with Godfrey Tearle, who, by his "vast and urgent solemnity," made some sort of sense out of the tippling, toppled tragedian. As a Lear, *manqué* or otherwise, Godfrey is conceivable—he is a magnificent Othello. I next saw the piece at Oxford, where Emlyn's personality completely unfitted him for an actor contemplating Lear. Why, if he wants to keep his company together, doesn't he write a new play for them? A natural and prolific wit, steeped in the theatre to his very lips, and brimming over with plots—he could easily run up a new play in a matter of three weeks or so.

June 11 Making a general clear-out of my papers, I came *Wednesday*. across a letter from my brother Edward upbraiding me for some remissness on my part: "Thank your lucky stars I haven't got Hooker by me or I would have quoted you a passage that would make you skip. But I will look it up." Enclosed is one of his lists of old recoveries and discoveries:

(1) Among the expenses of the war [American War of Independence] which [our] government laid down before parliament, one of the items was for "five gross of scalping knives."

BUCKLE, *History of Civilisation in England*.

(2) Like the faint exquisite music of a dream.

A line, discovered by Landor, from Southey's *Thalaba*.

(3) . The happy swain
Who from his hard but peaceful bed roused up,
In's morning exercise saluted is
By a full choir of feathered choristers,
Wedding their notes to the enamoured air.

W. CHAMBERLAYNE (1619-89), discovered by me!

Edward's spirit flowered early. Here is a letter which he wrote when he was still in his teens. He had left school and gone to work at a cotton mill on the borders of Lancashire and Cheshire where he was set to the soulless job of entering up the wage-book. I kept this letter by me for twenty years and finally used it in *Responsibility*.

20 Thompson's Cross
Stalybridge

MY DEAR JIMMIE,

It is only the intellectually lost who write letters because they have news. I have nothing to say and am therefore full of matter.

My present mood is very Balzacian. *Le vieux monsieur* has me in his toils; it is an awful thought that there is nobody of the young generation who knows anything about him except ME. Your ignorance is still pitiful; you might almost be a Frenchman! Do you think you could tell me what ultimately became of Madame de Bauséant and by whom her house was inhabited after her betrayal? Do you know whom Maxime de Trailles or Rastignac or Ajuda-Pinto married? I'm in the middle of *Le Député d'Arcis*. Charles Rabou's continuation is marvellous and there's hardly a line to which one can point and say "That's not Balzac!" He has had the tact to fill up with some of the lesser known characters, le Comte et la Comtesse de l'Estorade, Madame de Camps, MM de Rhétoré, de Ronquerolles, and others, which rounds off the Comedy splendidly. And he resuscitates Vautrin out of sheer daring.

I am, I think, more Balzacian now than at any former time; I do not remember ever to have been so Balzacian. Your knowledge of him is superficial, mine fundamental. You have an inkling of the general plan and the big junctions of the Human Comedy; what you don't know is the inner workings, the small roadside stations, and where Balzac's engine stopped to take up water. If I fault him at all it is that he can never be less than stupendous. He ranges the whole world but does not move easily on the lower slopes. He can be sublime without achieving the graceful, and good honest fun is at all times beyond him. But where he is unrivalled is in his dissection of human folly. Take the divine simplicity of César Birotteau, the cunning imbecility of Crevel, the crass stupidity of Bargeton, and the lovable absurdities of the old maid Rose Cormon. "*Mais, ma chère, c'est si naturel d'avoir des enfants.*" I should sometimes be tempted to think that Balzac despises, were it not that this is the one thing a great mind may not do.

I feel that he often lacks sympathy and that in this respect he is more of a transcribing machine than an artist. In fact, Balzac is not an artist at all in the sense that art is selective. He is comprehensive, God in a world of his own creating. He writes down in the simplest way possible and with no time for fine phrases the entire human animal, complete in all it does and says down to the last shadow of a thought that trembles for a moment at the back of the creature's brain. He turns his subject completely inside out, shows you its mental and moral intestines, and then packs it neatly up again, dismissing the poor bewildered thing with a contemptuous pat on the head. By the way, I have been unfaithful to him lately to the extent of re-reading Flaubert's *L'Education Sentimentale*. And yet despite my increasing admiration for this book I am more than ever convinced that Flaubert could not fill a large canvas. Just as I can never write seriously upon any subject without submerging myself fathoms below any possible meaning, so Flaubert cannot leave a situation without so thoroughly engrossing you in the handling of it that you forget the scene on which it is dependent and are without curiosity as to the scene which is to come. But he has pages which never cloy, from which the last drops of beauty will never be wrung. Read the passage beginning "*Des femmes nonchalamment assises dans les calèches.*" Isn't this our Paris, our very own Paris, Paris in our moods, never mind hers? Balzac had no time for such a sentence as "*Madame Vatnaz mangea à elle seule le buisson d'écrevisses, et les carapaces sonnaient sous ses longues dents.*"

I suppose the book is what stupid people would call a sermon. Certainly I do not know how any man is going to take to himself a mistress other than cynically after reading the account of Frédéric's waning passion for Rosanette. "*Ses paroles, sa voix, son sourire, tout vint à lui déplaire, ses regards surtout, cet œil de femme éternellement limpide et inepte, mais un goût des sens âpre et bestial l'entraînait vers elle, illusions d'une minute qui se résolvaient en haine.*" It's as discouraging as the major prophets! Neither Balzac nor Flaubert are "good for people to read." The one excites to madness, the other drugs to indifference. I sometimes wonder whether other people besides ourselves make more account of books than of life. Are we abnormal? I swear that Balzac has destroyed every vestige of any moral sense I ever possessed. This is not the same thing as saying that he is immoral, but rather that he unfits you for the humdrum of life. What do I care for anything that can happen to me at Thompson's Cross so long as I have the surge and surf of the great Pandemonium in my

ears ? Enough for to-night. *Je te laisse pour la Maréchale. Elle est enceinte.*

Le Boulevard Croix de Thompson avec ses lumières, ses splendeurs, le va-et-vient de ses riches équipages, ses femmes étincelantes nonchalamment assises dans les calèches, ses lions (ah, voilà Monsieur le Vicomte Wally de Buckley dans le four-wheeler de Madame la Marquise de Runelles, née Runnel tout court). C'est là, mon cher, la vie telle que nous l'avons rêvée. Cet hôtel-là, le numéro vingt, entouré de toutes ces richesses, mérite d'être connu. Là les dîners superbes, le mutton-chop ou le rump-steak suivi d'une bribe de fromage dit Cheshire, le Bass à perdre la raison, les cigares à quatre sous. Là, rien de vulgaire, rien de bourgeois, rien de commun. Les conversations sur la littérature, la peinture, la musique ; les réunions d'artistes, les causeries spirituelles et les fines débauches—un salon, quoi ? Mais sur le boulevard, c'est autre chose. Là, la foule vomie des usines, des workshops, des mille endroits où l'on gagne ce qu'on appelle le spending-brass, la foule infecte parade dans les rues puantes. Là, on sent le fried-fish et les chips. Là, on entend les Chase-me ! des gens à shawl. Quand vient la nuit on frôle l'amour impudique, dénué de poésie. . . .

Last night I had the temerity to draw my weary bones to the theatre, unable to resist the promise of *Aspasia, Adapted from the famous French Novel of that Name*. The hoardings foretold *A Picture of Night Life in Paris*. It would have been indecent if it had not been farcical. Never have I seen the Lancashire atmosphere so well put on the stage as in this artless reaching out after the French. The thing began with a *Bal-masque (sic)* of which the principal figure was one calling herself "La Pipotte—a loose woman." Aspasia herself reminded me of nothing so much as a fifth-rate Polly Eccles. She was enormous. She appeared at the top of a rickety staircase crowned with a wreath of red paper roses with the device "Vive l'Amoor !" (*sic*). She wore red tights and a leopard-skin with lace insertions, the whole surmounted by a feather "boa." Hoisted on to a wooden stool, she recited a poem in praise of love, after which the orgy began, the scent of the crowd's Wild Woodbines lending additional charm to the *tourbillon de la danse*. To use the word "crude" in connection with the spoken lines is to expose the poverty of the English language. I cite a gem or two.

"Ah, Aspasia, there's a woman for you ! What arms, what legs, *what a chest !* "

"Frailty, thy name is Aspasia. What man has ever possessed thee *for more than a fortnight at a stretch !* "

And then the lover breaking out in allusion to the infant mewling and puking in the earlier scenes.

"Is that bastard brat, fruit of your sold body, *to stick for ever in my gills*?"

Whereat Thompson's Cross whole-heartedly applauds. More life-force, you see.

There were other incredible things in connection with the performance. My neighbour in the eighteen-penny stalls spent the intervals and part of the play itself in reading Lessing's *Dramaturgie* in German. The pianist, tiring of trumpery waltz tunes, struck into a Brahms Intermezzo, and once the monstrous Aspasia said in tolerable French, "*Que la vie de province est donc triste!*"

La pièce terminée, on descend la rue à présent déserte. L'ivrogne se hâte d'aller prodiguer chez sa chère épouse les tendresses provoquées par le bottled stout. Deux chats, un bobby, et des amoureux tardifs, voilà tout ce qui reste debout. Les one-up-and-one-down, les villas, les semi-detached, enferment la population honnête et abrutie. Allons, mon cher, montons le boulevard Croix de Thompson. On a beau chercher les équipages, les belles, les dandys. Le Vicomte Wally de Buckley est depuis longtemps couché. Il a son bellyful du Pale Ale. Il pousse des hoquets, sans doute. Que l'air de sa chambre doit être lourd, et sa tête glabre sur l'oreiller horrible à voir. . . . On cherche son latch-key, et on entre chez soi. Dieu! que la vie de province est donc triste . . . !

EDWARD

This is the last I shall be able to retrieve of that wry spirit who was half Balzac's *mystificateur*, Bixiou, and half Laforgue's *Pierrot Fumiste*.

June 12 Letter from A.C.2 Heanley, formerly John Byron,
Thursday. the actor. Joined up at that dismal hole Penarth,
but moved to Weston-super-Mare, whereupon a
"dreary" frolic became a "dainty" one. Sends me a copy of
the *Strand Magazine* for some month in 1894 with a lot of
photographs of Sarah B. John's nursing of me at Oxford was
extraordinary. My asthma was pretty bad last winter, and he
went out of his way to see that, when Charlie was off duty, I
wasn't left alone, taking me home on dark, foggy nights, and
being at all times thoughtfully, preventively kind.

June 15 Sunday. Leo, after carefully reading the proofs of my *Express and Admirable*: "It's most amusing to dip into, and the less you read of it the better."

June 17 Tuesday. Leo Pavia has now installed himself in Jock's place. Henceforth I look to find my typing witty, inventive, and, in inessentials, wildly inaccurate.

June 18 Wednesday. "Yes," I said. "But suppose I start to read Proust now, how much of my life shall I have to give up to him?" The Proustian said, "All of it." And for this, frankly, I am not prepared. "The English bishops have been vivacious almost to wonder," writes Fuller, commenting on their lordships' tenacity of life. I want a word for insistence on many-sidedness.

So many hours must I tend my flock;
So many hours must I take my rest;
So many hours must I contemplate;
So many hours must I sport myself;

How shall a man know all about books, bridge, painting, boxing, music, cricket, golf, horses, the theatre? How shall he be an authority on Proust and Culbertson, Jonathan Wild and Jimmie Wilde, William Morris and Old Tom Morris, Beethoven and Bradman? Were I a *rentier* with nothing to do in life, how still could I hope to know all about surrealism and atonalism, chess-openings and the best order in which to tackle the Lake hills? How make myself master of Proust and the Hackney Stud Book as well?

June 19 Thursday. One of my most cherished possessions is a *Life of Betterton*, published in 1710. Pages 15-44 are missing, which is unfortunate, because at the bottom of page 14 Betterton is in the middle of an elaborate explanation of the Decay of the Stage. He puts this down to the long continuance of "the war":

For as War carries abundance of peccant Humours from a State, generated by the corruptions of a long and luxurious Peace; so does it introduce a sort of Libertinism in our Diversions, contrary to Decorum and Regularity; without which no Pleasure can be truly noble.

A little later :

Thus when the *Roman* Virtue decay'd, or indeed was lost with their liberty, and they subsisted and spread their Dominions more by the Merits of their Ancestors, and the *Roman* Name, made terrible by them, than by their own Bravery, then Effeminacy and Folly spread through the People, which immediately appear'd in their Sports or Spectacles ; *Tragedy* was slighted ; Farce on the other hand, with its Mimes and Pantomimes ; and the Opera on the other, with its emasculating sounds, invade and vanquish the Stage, and draw the Ears and Eyes of the People ; who now care only to laugh, or to see things extravagant and monstrous. I wish this may not be too much our own Case. But being unwilling to guess at a hidden Cause, when there is an apparent one, I choose rather to attribute this decay of *Tragedy* to our want of *Tragedians* and indeed *Tragic Poets*, than to the Corruption of the People ; which, tho' great enough, yet I hope not so desperate, as what I have mention'd in the *Roman* State.

June 20 Reading Reinhardt I find :
Friday.

The over life-size parts—King Lear, for instance, and Prospero—which Shakespeare wrote for his contemporaries, are too big for most of our modern players. They haven't the strength to develop them in a single theatrical performance. But the screen gives them time, and so strength, to play these parts. For three months perhaps, they build up Shakespeare's characters, a little every day, without strain or hurry. And so, in the end, they too can get the effect of the superhuman.

Has the screen ever before been given away so dreadfully ? What should we think of a heavyweight boxing champion who could fight only one round a day, of a Derby winner which could run only a furlong at a time, of an opera singer who could manage only one aria an evening ? As a man of the theatre Professor Reinhardt ought to deplore the fact that the tragic actor of to-day is not up to his job. As a man of the film he prefers to rejoice in the invention of a medium which can dispense with great acting, and whose genius it is to persuade us that pigmies are giants. It all comes down to a self-evident truth which I am tired of repeating. Tragic acting in the theatre is a triumph of art ; tragic acting on the films is the triumph of fake.

June 22 Sunday. Germany invades Russia. There is talk of Hitler winning in three weeks.

June 25 Wednesday. A month ago I wrote an Open Letter to Any Musical Critic bidding him come out in the open and tell us whether we must grow new ears to deal with the atonal stuff, and how long it will take. Or whether the old ears, properly adapted, will do. And how long *that* might be expected to take. I sent the article to the *Radio Times* and the *Listener*. The former rejected it because it was too long; the latter because it was too short.

July 1 Tuesday. To Southwark for an open-air performance of *Taming of the Shrew*. The mode is to like culture for the masses. I loathe it. Too early for dinner and a devil of a job getting there. Sham Elizabethan setting. Uncomfortable seats. Heat wave. The wrong mood. Claire Luce a good termagant more convincing with the vitriol than with the honey. But both are water on the back of the unwashed. The kids frankly pay no attention—the Katharine and Petruchio brawlings are obviously poor stuff compared with Mum and Dad. The elders, of course, see nothing funny in Christopher, whose counterpart is to be seen lying by the score in Southwark's gutters every Saturday night. Get back to civilisation just in time to find the Café Royal closing. So to bed starving, and feeling exactly like Kate in Act IV.

July 3 Thursday. Noel's spiritualist farce, *Blithe Spirit*, was a popular success last night, though I thought it rather vulgar. The theme might be taken from Nina Jesson's lines in Pinero's *His House in Order*. "Isn't it ridiculous of a man to have the portraits of two wives stuck in front of him?" By the way, I have always thought that the second Mrs Copperfield, standing at her husband's desk with her right hand pointing upward, was busy with her left putting Dora's picture away.

July 8 Tuesday. The curse of journalism is the temptation to turn everything into copy. In the end it becomes an instinct. At tea-time to-day Ted Elliott (see *Ego*)

blew in with an amazing story which I at once began to think of in terms of a *Daily Express* article. It took Ted six thousand words and two hours to tell his story, and my job was to compress it into six hundred words and five minutes' reading. Here is the result :

Ten stone of refusal to truckle summed up Ted Elliott when I knew him nine years ago. "Not for the Queen of Sheba ; road's too slippery !" meant he was going to push the old bus along at his pace, not mine. "Not if they were Roman emperors !" meant he wasn't going to say "sir" even to his boss's bosses, editors and such-like. So Ted left with a grin, maintaining that he wasn't the truckling sort. And presently I began to get postcards from all over the world—Rio, Cape-town, Jamaica. Ted might be a deck-hand on a banana boat, but he hadn't truckled.

Hear now a story, a genuine tale of the sea, which is pure Conrad. Except that Conrad was too great an artist to have piled it on so thick. Tropic night, silence, the torpedo. And here is Seaman-gunner Elliott of Shepherd's Bush, with four broken ribs, being helped on to a raft by a passenger, a white Tanganyika policeman. Presently the ship's junior radio operator is hauled aboard. "Man's knowledge of the sea," says somebody, "begins when his state is reduced to a plank, a yard of sail, a biscuit, and a keg of water, when he himself is stripped to the elements of his soul." Our trio have nothing but the raft's boards and their own courage. No compass, no sail, no oars, no food, no water. By day no shelter from the liquid sun. By night no protection from the sharks, nosing round the raft's edge and, getting underneath it, trying literally to bump their victims off. Sit with knees under chin. Mustn't truckle to sharks.

On the fourth day, sighting something, they use the lid of a cigarette tin as heliograph. It is the U-boat which sank them. (What novelist would dare coincidence so preposterous ?) Commander wears a Glengarry with its Army badge. Speaking perfect English, he tells them the drift has carried them sixty miles, and that in two days they must make land. Gives them water, biscuits, bottle of brandy, cigarettes, matches. No, he will not tow them, since that would drag the raft under. *Auf Wiedersehen*. A wave sweeps the biscuit tin overboard. Three days exhausts the water. Horizon still empty. No, the U-boat commander has not lied ; the current has changed. And then follows a succession of those things which, we say comfortably, don't happen except in story-books. The vessel

less than a mile off that doesn't hear them shouting down the wind. The flying-boat that doesn't see them. The hospital ship, lights blazing, whose attention they cannot catch, shirts being too wet to take fire. Eleventh day, radio operator dies. Twelfth day, fifth without water, Seaman-gunner Elliott becomes delirious. Stand-up fight on five-foot raft. Policeman k.o.'s Seaman-gunner. Thirteenth day somebody says something about a ship. What ship? Six stone of skin, bone, and salt-water boils—much too tired to bother about ships.

"I suppose you swapped stories?" I said. Ted nodded. "They didn't seem very funny. I'll tell you a funny one, though," he went on. "When I got my new suit at Liverpool on Saturday there was a bloke with me who'd been torpedoed before. 'Where do we change?' he said. '*In the billiard-room, as usual?*'" With a smile, "He wasn't the truckling sort, either."

Well, Seaman-gunner Edward Elliott, the opinion of *Daily Express* readers is that you and all of your kind should go on refusing to truckle. Keep it up, *Sirs*!

The B.B.C. called on Ted in the evening and got him to make a short record which is to be broadcast to-morrow.

July 9 *King John* at the New Theatre. Ernest Milton *Wednesday.* wore a wonderful wig made out of what looked like a discarded tea-cosy, and a crown made apparently out of the business part of a permanent wave-machine. Altogether he presented a highly scarifying, amoral appearance. But he got all the poetry out of the part, and I suspected him of putting some of it in.

The fact that Arthur is invariably played by a buxom young woman suggests that after the war there should be a more diligent rummaging in musical drawers and cupboards. Somewhere, I am sure, will be found a score entitled *Il Re Giovanni*, dramma lirico di Guglielmo Shakespeare e Giuseppe Verdi, with a second act curtain falling on a duet between Arturo and Oberto. One evening, on some Sussex Sward . . .

This play might well be used to illustrate the difference between W. S. and G. B. S. Shakespeare, writing his play about King John, left out Magna Charta; Shaw, when he writes his play about Magna Charta, will leave out King John.

July 10 Thursday. I have never been able to get musicians to think logically, perhaps because their brains refuse to think other than musically. I cannot get them to see that to set, say, *King Lear* to music is to destroy Shakespeare, for the simple reason that Shakespeare plus Jones is no more pure Shakespeare than coffee plus chicory is pure coffee. Scaling Scafell Pike is never the same thing as scaling Scafell. Peaks, however twin, are not the same peak. Not enough stress has been laid on the musical time-lag. When in *King Lear* Gloucester says "O ruin'd piece of nature!" you get sound and sense in one and the same breath. Now consider how many breaths your tenor has to take before he is allowed to tell us in the *Messiah* what his first aria is all about. First we have the nine-bar symphony. Then the tenor has his tentative "Ev'ry valley" which is dutifully echoed by the orchestra. So encouraged, the tenor starts again, and finding no contradiction goes on to tell us that the valley shall be exal . . . Note that Handel has got us emotionally where he wants us thirteen bars before we know whether the valley is to be exalted or exaluminated—both capital words speaking Johnsonially and botanically.

Now consider Gloucester's "Let me kiss that hand" in terms of *Comfort ye*. First the exordium in E major, *larghetto e piano*: three endless bars, after which Gloucester says "Let me kiss . . ." The orchestra confirms his request. Then Gloucester has a sustained E, again asking permission to "kiss. . . ." And Handel has achieved his effect before we know what part of the royal anatomy Gloucester proposes to salute.

The composer who sets Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* essentially destroys it for the reason that *the heavens he lifts it to are not those of the poet*. All he can do is to write a masterpiece of music round the same subject. Debussy was on the right tack when he wrote his *Cathédrale Engloutie* and then discovered, as I hope he did, that he had made a perfect transcript of

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day.

July 11 Friday. Albert Throup writes that he has sold King Neptune to a dairy company for £82 10s. 0d. As I gave eighty guineas for him and kept him for over three years I cannot count this as one of my profitable

transactions. My stud is now reduced to two animals—Ego and Lady Viking.

July 13 “If she should break it now!” says Hamlet of the *Sunday*. Player Queen’s solemn protestation. If he, meaning Hitler, should break it now, meaning the Stalin line! To-day is the day when, according to many, which included me, Hitler would be dictating terms in Moscow. Which only shows the wisdom of excluding war speculation from the Diary.

July 14 Picking up in the Charing Cross Road a beautifully *Monday*. printed, well-bound copy of Charles and Frances Brookfield’s *Mrs Brookfield and Her Circle*—which included Thackeray, Tennyson, Arthur Hallam, the Carlyles, Kinglake, Monckton Milnes—I came across this opening to a letter, written in 1845 by Jane Brookfield to her husband.

The poor Horse died last night—Boosey announced it with a quivering voice at tea, and sorry we all were—but Harry rallied sufficiently to propose taking Julia’s young horse in to the dead horse’s stable to teach him a lesson of mortality. All yesterday till near 5 o’clock the Church Bell was tolling for a lady who died on Saturday, I believe. Harry suggested tolling our dinner bell for the horse, also pulling down the stable blinds!

Five hundred delightful pages for 6d. “Now I see,” says Shakespeare’s Cleopatra, “In Fulvia’s death, how mine received shall be.” Now I see at what price the next generation will value Ego and his Circle.

July 15 The mentality of the English publisher is something *Tuesday*. I shall never master. Take the illustrations to the edition of Shakespeare open in front of me. The storm scene from *The Tempest* is in the middle of the *Merry Wives*; the church scene from *Much Ado* illustrates *Love’s Labour’s Lost*; Titania and Bottom disport themselves in *A Winter’s Tale*; Bassanio makes his choice in the cellar in which Hubert proposes to put out Arthur’s eyes; Othello tells his story in Lear’s hovel; the weird sisters appear to Hamlet, who mourns Ophelia to the passion of *Venus and Adonis*. Something to do with the economics of binding, I suppose.

1941]

EGO 5

July 16 A letter from Bournemouth :
Wednesday.

DEAR MR AGATE,

The highbrows have got hold of the wrong end of the stick about P. G. Wodehouse. Oxford University should be censured for honouring a writer who is *too* serious. Pelham Granville has always struck me as a funebrially boring and super-scientifically-realistic chronicler of the habits and customs of a desperately uninteresting breed of morons.

This afternoon I stumbled into a film which I pick as the year's best—though if any of youse critics puts it on his list of the best ten I'll eat my old ration book. It is called *Blonde Inspiration*, narrates with heartless satire and ruthless relish the fate of a young man who thinks he is a great writer, but whose real talent is for scribbling 'Westerns' in pulp magazines, and stars my favourite film hero (John Shelton) and heroine (ever heard of Virginia Grey? I confess I'd never). Admirable cast includes my favourite film comedian, Charles Butterworth, in a part which just tickles me to death, that of leading round on a string the dumbest cutie ever. Her share in the proceedings consists solely in entering and leaving rooms and seating and unseating herself to the accompaniment of such admonitions as "Lift it, baby!" "Park it, baby!" If Busby Berkeley isn't Hollywood's most brilliant and witty director I'll . . . eat my NEW ration book. Boy, this film is great!

Yours ever,

GEORGE RICHARDS

July 17 One of those good days when other people do
Thursday. the talking. At lunch somebody said this super-Jewish thing: "I don't believe in paying back money unless one gets something in return."

Edgar Lustgarten, about a well-paid job at Singapore coming into the market: "I'm not applying—there's nothing to do at Singapore except sit on your backside and wait three or four years for Somerset Maugham to turn up and write a short story about you."

Moray McLaren, about a moneylender who is at his office every morning at half-past seven. When he was asked the reason for this early hour the moneylender said, "The bank-clerks!" Surely this is infinitely sinister?

July 21 Monday. The proof-sheets of *Thursdays and Fridays* arrived and, as Boswell says, "amused me finely at breakfast." How human Boswell is! In his letter to the Rev. William Temple he goes on, "I cannot help hoping for some applause. You will be kind enough to communicate to me all that you hear, and to conceal from me all censure."

July 23 Wednesday. Letter re Amanda Ros from William Moore, a Belfast journalist :

I was playing bowls at Larne a week or so ago. I mentioned Amanda to a man who knew her intimately. "Heth," he chuckled with gusto, "she was the boy that cud a' put yese all in yer corners when it come to the writin'."

July 24 Thursday. Première of Disney's *Fantasia*. We started with Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor, where, the pictures turning out to be abstract, I just closed my eyes and listened. "The *Sacre du Printemps* never was, and never will be, concert music," said Basil Cameron, when I asked him about it this afternoon. Stravinsky, knowing this, took damned good care to make the thing a ballet, in order, I suppose, that the terpsichorean prinks might excuse the musical pranks. Disney, turning the tables on the meddlers who will not let masterpieces alone, invents a ballet for himself, showing the earth in a state of pre-Miltonic existence. A Zoo without keepers. This part of the film was not bad, but too long. The Pastoral Symphony was Disney at his worst : in the matter of the *Ewig-Weibliche* he never seems able to get away from the dumber kind of chorus girl.

July 27 Sunday. Went to tea at Wilfred Rouse's and listened to myself taking part in the Brains Trust. Was horrified at my delivery. Can it be that what I regard as an equable, urbane flow is as over-emphatic and over-accentuated as it seemed to me this afternoon? I sounded *bumptious*. I would amend this for the next broadcast a fortnight hence but for the fact that this too was recorded last Wednesday. And here is a frightful thing. This is the slip I made when we were recording, and which will presently be blazoned to the world. Nothing less, if you please, than attributing Macbeth's

Under him,
My Genius is rebuked ; as, it is said,
Mark Antony's was by Cæsar

to some unspecified act in *Julius Cæsar*. What made me make the slip I can't think, as I know *Macbeth* backwards. It is too late to recall it, and presently I shall get rebukes from every sharp-witted schoolboy who "did" the play last term.

July 29 Tuesday. Was told of a fine thing said by H. M. Tomlinson about Montague. "The reason that Bloomsbury doesn't understand Montague is that he is essentially a moralist, and that all his criticisms are exercises in irony on a base of morals."

July 30 Wednesday. Leo said, "Why don't you write a book about your debts ? Since it would be long and involved you could call it *A la Recherche de l'Argent Perdu*." If Leo and I ever split, it will be on the rock of Goethe, whom he idolises and I loathe. "With this feeling of superiority, it has been possible for me to bear the stupid pretentiousness of my enemies." I see no difference between Goethe talking to Eckermann, and Hitler screaming into the mike that "with this feeling of superiority, it is impossible for Germany to bear the stupid pretensions of her neighbours."

Aug. 3 Sunday. One of the advantages of a house over a flat is that you can put people up. I am now being looked after by Harry Caliendo—who helped Fred Leigh to build the dug-out—his womenfolk, three cats, and Rob, a wire-haired terrier. Some of their relatives arriving for the Bank Holiday, I managed to dig up a bottle of wine, and it was all very jolly.

Aug. 5 Tuesday. Spent an hour in the blitzed South London Palace. Groped my way through black passages to the auditorium open to the sky. Climbed, rather fearfully, the darkened stairs to the gallery. Silence and desolation. I hold a destroyed theatre to present a more melancholy spectacle than any other ruined building. We expect a playhouse to be a place of gaiety, or in the case of a tragedy, of exaltation. Leigh Hunt has a similar idea about the death of a comedian:

The death of a comic actor is felt more than that of a tragedian. He has sympathised more with us in our everyday feelings, and has given us more amusement. Death with a tragedian seems all in the way of business. Tragedians have been dying all their lives. They are a 'grave' people. But it seems a hard thing upon the comic actor to quench his airiness and vivacity—to stop him in his happy career—to make us think of him, on the sudden, with solemnity—and to miss him for ever. We could have "better spared a better man." It is something like losing a merry child. We have not got used to the gravity. Mrs Siddons, the other day, was missed far less than Elliston will be.

To return to the South London Palace. On the wall at the back of the stalls was the cast of the revue *Why Be Serious!* On the floor was the ukulele part of a foxtrot entitled *That's for Me!* And lying on the top of the blackened, piled-up seats was a man's dress-suit thick with dust.

I thought of *Twelfth Night*:

In the south suburbs, at the Elephant,
Is best to lodge; I will bespeak our diet
Whiles you beguile the time and feed your knowledge
With viewing of the town.

No sight in Shakespeare's day so sad as that ukulele player's dress-suit abandoned, never to be worn again.

Aug. 7 Letter from the author of *Throng o' Scarlet*, a
Thursday. magnificent unacted Irish play about which I have
been spreading myself in the *Sunday Times*. It
seems that the piece was about to go into rehearsal when the
war broke out:

Gravellye
Cuckfield
Sussex

4 Aug. '41

DEAR JAMES AGATE,

It was very nice of you to mention *Throng o' Scarlet* yesterday. But you were wrong in your assumption that the subject itself put us off from war-time production. We were all quite agreed on the necessity for postponing that particular play. I have no very high opinion of the policy of the leading West-End managers, who simply packed up at sight when the war

began and are now busy chasing knighthoods in Ensa. Their policy is "Oh, b—— the playwrights. It doesn't matter what happens to them. They'll turn up again, though maybe a bit starved, when the show is over." I know it has personally soured me, so much so that I rejected an invitation to do a play for the Theatre Guild. Instead I wrote a couple of novels which I sold at once, and am now doing another which U.S.A. bought even before I wrote it. The plays I had planned are simply gone cold, and as I can see I can quickly 'make' myself as a novelist, I quite honestly am thinking of chucking the theatre for good. One is hardly inclined to stick by a crew that takes to the boats as soon as the cabin-boy shouts that a storm has broken. At the moment, save a few platinum revue stars gone all arty into Ibsen, or a few old blonde war-horses (of the last war) who have found a second youth at Ensa shows, everybody connected with the theatre is disappointed and angry. Neither actor nor dramatist has ever had much of an opinion of the West-End managers; only one leading firm made any serious effort to stand by its players and playwrights when the war got under way. All the other managers, who have never had any sense of responsibility to the real theatre, and who rather pride themselves on being 'commercial,' simply retired to the country. And yet any of them would pretend to be highly shocked if the proprietor of a business, in fear of losing money, shut up his establishment and turned his employees into the street.

I am not inclined to believe that all this helter-skeltering can be blamed on the British public. Any public is as intelligent as it is allowed to be. Russia has proved that. No man really wants to have his mind kept moribund. A few games of good bridge will generally make a man tired of beggar-my-neighbour. I know a hundred average people who have said to me, unaware that I am a playwright, "We never go to the theatre now. There's nothing worth seeing. Why doesn't somebody put on a good play?" Why indeed?

Yours sincerely,

VIVIAN CONNELL

Aug. 8 In recognition of the fact that since the outbreak of
Friday. war I have tried to do something for current music,
 Keith Douglas has given me a permanent box for the
 Proms. Very gracious, and I have shown what I think about it
 by attending twelve out of the twenty-three concerts to date.

Last night was a Schubert-Mendelssohn evening, and, having

been kept at the *Express* office, I was three-quarters of an hour late, but arrived in time for the Violin Concerto, which, I suppose, is the piece I have heard oftenest in a career of concert-going now lasting some fifty-six years. I was seven when my father took me to my first Hallé concert. (See *Ego*.) It is impossible for me now to compute how often I heard Neruda play this most rewarding piece. And I have other memories in connection with it. Of Lenny Watkins, the violin master at Giggleswick, under whose windows I would stand and listen while he practised it for the school concert to the accompaniment of the little beck, or brook, which bubbles through the street outside the music cottages. Or did, fifty years ago. . . . Of Low Hall, Appletreewick, during that hot summer holiday when my brother Edward, who was eleven, was learning the concerto and I was lying in the croft, half pasture and half orchard, grinding away at *Old Mortality*, that year's holiday task.

Last night's soloist chose to play broadside on to the audience, which meant that she gave her back to me. She crouched over her instrument like a rugger forward in a scrum, whereas Neruda used to face the audience squarely so that arm and fiddle jutted out into the audience like the figurehead of a battleship. Why, by the way, must modern virtuosi always take the last movement too fast? They may be Sarasates, which I doubt. Even so, they leave the orchestra behind, and what is a successful hurdle race for them makes nonsense of Mendelssohn's delicate and precise orchestration. The concert ended with Schubert's great Symphony in C, magnificently conducted by Basil Cameron.

Afterwards to the Café Royal. Fell in with Mark and Dolly Hambourg, both in great form. Mark said he was probably the only person in this country who had played the piano in the Reichstag, which he did at some charity performance in 1905. Dolly, who still uses a lorgnette, told me how, years ago, she was mobbed in Sydney for looking in the shop windows through one. Mark said, "You forget to mention, my dear girl, that you were also smoking a cigar!"

Aug. 9 To-night's concert was another nostalgic affair—
Saturday. the Max Bruch Violin Concerto that Edward was
studying the second year we went to Appletreewick,
and I lay on my stomach on the sofa—the summer was wet—

struggling with the holiday task, the infinitely boring *Quentin Durward*. Afterwards to the Café Royal with Gwen Chenhalls and Basil Cameron, who insisted on buying Bollinger '29. After looking round to see that no Rubinsteins were about, I countered with Perrier-Jouët of the same year.

Aug. 11 Supper at the Savoy with a young highbrow play-
Monday. wright, who explained at great length the elaborate sociological thesis lying behind his last comedy of manners and which, it seems, I had entirely failed to grasp. I thought of the young lady who, going through a course of instruction in nursing and being asked how she would treat a cold, replied, "I should put *my* feet into hot water till *you* were in a profuse perspiration."

Aug. 13 Heard a good Beecham story that was new to me.
Wednesday. During the rehearsal of a broadcast Hallé Concert a young highbrow at the controls said, "Sir Thomas, I don't hear the bassoon counterpoint in the stretto of the fugue." T. B. gravely replied, "Young man, you are not meant to hear it!"

Aug. 14 *Express and Admirable* was published some days
Thursday. ago. My Press-cutting subscription has run out and I shan't renew it; the reviews in the highbrow weeklies would make me too angry. Yet I claim to have achieved something. This is that I have over and over again broken the first rule of popular journalism—that no name shall be mentioned with which readers are not already familiar. For example, while Leonardo da Vinci just scrapes in, Lope de Vega is definitely out. The rule applies with even more strictness to living people, or to persons recently dead. A former editor of mine tore out of his popular paper my review of a book about Elgar because his readers "are not interested in Elgar." Similarly a note on the death of Landon Ronald was cut because readers "are not interested in conductors, except of the dance-band variety." But there are more ways of spiking an editor's guns than rushing them. There is the flank attack. When Virginia Woolf died I debated long how to get her name into the paper; finally I had an inspiration,

The readers at whom I was aiming being addicts of the cinema, I made a chain—the film called *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, Elizabeth Barrett, Elizabeth Barrett's dog, the dog's breeder, and finally Virginia in her rôle as dogographer. The paragraph went through without a murmur, the mention of Flush 'carrying' Virginia.

Aug. 16 Instructed Romeike and Curtice to send me
Saturday. cuttings.

Aug. 18 Leo said to-day, "The Germans may be brutal,
Monday. the French false, the Italians treacherous, the
Russians savage, the Spaniards insincere, the Scan-
dinavians too aloof, the Dutch too grasping, the Slavs too dirty.
But they all have a quality denied to the English—they have
brains."

This reminds me of something I found the other day when I was browsing after Edward's manner. I can see one of his neat postcards with quotation and source carefully set down and, in the corner, the punctilious "E. A."

Après l'anglais, qui a reçu la blonde et le génie industriel en indemnité de la privation du soleil, le Hibou est certainement le moins à plaindre de tous les condamnés aux ténèbres.

ALPHONSE TOUSSENEL (1853)

Aug. 21 Have finished assembling *Here's Richness! An*
Thursday. *Anthology of and by James Agate.* This is a defen-
sive measure brought about by the persistent
neglect of the professional anthologists. Beginning with *L. of C.*,
the reviews of my books have been of a kind which, as Allan
Monkhouse once said, would have made Milton blush. "Alde-
baran among pasty twinklers" (Humbert Wolfe). "He has
vividness, wit, lots of perversities no more damaging to the total
effect than were the bubbles and bits of dross in old stained
glass; above all, he has that immense zest for the theatre and
for life; all his wires are live, and they spark continually" (C. E.
Montague). "His terrific gusto acts like a goad, while his
torrential perceptions stir the sleeping philosopher in every

reader " (Ivor Brown). " Agate has something of Hazlitt's gusto and romanticism and wilfulness " (J. B. Priestley). " There's no doubt about the readability of *Ego*, its glitter, its sense, its thumping good humour " (Hugh Walpole). " It is not enough to possess *Ego*. One would like to organise some graceful national demonstration in its honour " (Rebecca West).

But I do not ask for a national demonstration. All I want is a modest place in Mr X's *Good Reading*, Miss Y's *Good Writing*, and that new edition of *One Thousand Best Bits of Recent Prose*. Or were Rebecca and the others just lying? If not, then why do the anthologies contain no examples of my vividness and gusto, wilfulness and glitter? Years ago I prefaced a book of essays with a quotation from Rabelais: " Hence Mastiffs, Dogs in a Doublet; get you behind, aloof Villains, out of my Sunshine; Currs to the Devil. Do you jog hither, wagging your Tails, to pant at my Wine, and bepiss my Barrel? What, are you there yet? Grr, Grr, Grrrrr. Avant, Avant! Will you not be gone? "

To-day I am a lamp-post against which no anthologist lifts his leg.

Aug. 23 Wrote to Osbert Sitwell asking if he will contribute
Saturday. the Introduction to *Here's Richness!*

Aug. 24 Immense crowd at the Albert Hall last night for the
Sunday. last of the Proms. Have attended eighteen of the thirty-seven concerts. The things I most enjoyed have been *The Swan of Tuonela* (Sibelius), the Max Bruch Violin and the Elgar Violoncello Concertos, the Dvořák *New World* and the Schubert C Major Symphonies.

Aug. 26 Hutchinson 'phoned to say that they have sold one
Tuesday. thousand copies of *Express and Admirable* and are reprinting. .

Aug. 27 *Le mot juste*: " Going one day into a shop in
Wednesday. Paternoster-row to seek for some lines in Mr Wordsworth's poetry to *interlard* some prose with . . ." (Hazlitt).

Aug. 28 Thursday. *The Cherry Orchard* again. How alive these people are ! Twenty years after the fall of the curtain, Madame Ranevsky will come to anchor in some third-rate Paris *pension*. Gayef will be an aristocratic sponger ; unlike Pishtchik, who despite the pills will live to be ninety, he will never pay back. Trophimof will become vaguer and Varya sourer. Anya will have married. Lopakhin will have taken to himself an expensive mistress, and restored the economic balance by engaging Ephikhodof as his valet and paying him no wages to speak of. Dunyasha has drifted to the streets, and the governess with a mania for card-tricks performs in them. Yasha, the raffish young footman, haunted the Ritz bar for a time and came to a sticky end in the Place Blanche.

Aug. 29 Friday. The town swarms with strong healthy young Jews. Are we to suppose that they have all been turned down by the Services ? The real explanation is that in the art of being an *embusqué* the Jew has no equal. But then it is just this instinct, or talent, which has enabled him to survive at all. Sometimes the Jews make it really very difficult to be as much pro-Semite as I am.

Aug. 30 Saturday. *The Times Lit. Supp.* is snooty about *Express and Admirable*. Falls foul of my Virginia Woolf. "Even as an odd comment the paragraph is so inadequate and misleading that any bias a reader may feel against literary salvage reasserts itself." What did I say ? See entry for August 14.

Sept. 1 Monday. Charming letter from Osbert Sitwell consenting to write the Introduction to *Here's Richness !*

Sept. 2 Tuesday. The death of A. J. A. Symons is a loss—one grieves for a fine spirit cut short in mid-career. A. J. was more than an amateur of first editions and the secretary of a gastronomic club ; he was the best kind of highbrow. I imagine that he had done very little of his definitive *Life* of Oscar Wilde ; he told me that he had waited to begin this until he had received a friendly undertaking from all parties interested and still living that he was to be given a free hand.

Sept. 3 The widow of an actor said to me : " I was in love
Wednesday. with my husband only on the stage, not off. I
 adored his Romeo, Benedick, Troilus, Orlando.
 Sometimes he would bring his stage costumes home and dress up
 in them. But it wasn't the same thing. I was in love with him
 when he was acting and only when he was acting. Another
 woman would have made a fool of herself like other actors' wives
 and played Juliet and the rest." I said, " Why weren't you
 his leading lady ? " She replied, " My dear, use your eyes. I
 was always too plain ! "

Sept. 5 May and Wilfrid have given me for my birthday the
Friday. old drawing-room piano which belonged to my grand-
 mother. My earliest recollection is lying in bed at the
 top of our large house while up the well of the staircase came the
 aroma of my father's cigar and the sound of my mother or my
 aunt playing Mendelssohn, Chopin, Schubert (Impromptus),
 Schumann, Weber (Concertstück, Invitation, Rondo Brillante),
 and arrangements of *Norma* and *La Sonnambula*. They were
 both extremely accomplished pianists and had studied in
 Heidelberg under Heinefetter, pupil of Chopin and presumably a
 relative of the three sisters given in Grove, two of whom died
 insane. My aunt used to make us laugh with her imitation of
 Heinefetter, telling us how she too was a little mad and would
 start a lesson swathed in numberless shawls, discarding them as
 her temper rose. But, mad or sane, she taught her pupils to play
 the D flat waltz (op. 64) at the correct speed ; this is about half
 as fast as it is normally played. My compliments to our modern
 virtuosi and, mighty fine pianists though they are, let me tell
 them they cannot play the Waltz as this grotesque creature, who
 learned it from Chopin, used to play it. Or make the appoggia-
 turas in the middle section sound like horses' hoofs on a moonlit
 road. Even when we began to grow up we were not allowed to
 study what were known as Mamma's and Auntie's pieces ; they
 were sacrosanct, and it was right that they should be so. I
 remember the beautiful playing of my mother's old friend,
 Lizzie Pickering. " How do you like me ? " she asked when I
 was about six. " Very much," I replied. And then the critic in
 me asserted himself for the first time : " All but your boots." I

remember that this Miss Pickering went to Vienna to study under Leschtizky and returned two years later with her old technique gone and no new proficiency to replace it.

I can remember Sunday evening hymns, the nursery-rhymes of Scott-Gatty, and, oddly enough, the piano score of *Patience*. I used to spend hours putting together a plot which should be a reasonable framework for the extraordinarily recondite lyrics. Why should Bunthorne be raffled? Why did Lady Jane accompany herself on so improbable an instrument? Why, why? Those were the days when children wondered but did not ask questions. Only one comic song was ever played on the old instrument. This was "Oh, Honey, My Honey," sung by May Yohé in *Little Christopher Columbus*, and brought from London by Sophie Klaus, a school-friend of Mamma's. I remember "Aunt Sophie" very well. She was a *great* beauty, in spite of the fact that as a girl she had had smallpox. But of a *chic* unknown in these days, a Victorian elegance that has gone. She had run away from Heidelberg to marry a handsome German adventurer arrested for forgery as they were leaving the church. "Aunt Sophie" never saw him again, and spent the rest of her life keeping house for three wealthy brothers who lived in Leicestershire and hunted. There she enchanted everybody, as well she might, having the looks of Diana Wynyard, the poise of Ellis Jeffreys, and the wit of Kate Cutler. She lived to be well over eighty, and spent her last years in Battersea Park, where I visited her, and found her charm and elegance unimpaired. When such a paragon sanctioned anything, that thing, even if it was a coon song, became permissible. But there degradation stopped, and if we youngsters must indulge in the new craze for cake-walks we were bidden to confine that passion to the instrument in the schoolroom, or the wretched affair which my father bought to please my mother's first cousin, who lived in Warrington and dealt in second-hand grands.

The old instrument—Broadwood's told us that Queen Victoria bought the next number in the series—is still an exquisite piece of furniture. The elegant shape, the rosewood, the faded silk, the Henry Jamesian "tone of time," and the memories it evokes—all these go near to waking the latent Proustian in me.

Sept. 6 Came down last night to Bournemouth. Partly
Saturday. because I need a week-end, and partly to meet
 my unknown and witty correspondent, George
 Richards. "He that's coming must be provided for.
 Will snoop round and find digs for you." The board-
 ing-house in which G. R. discovered the last bed in
 Bournemouth turns out to be extremely comfortable.
 Perhaps too many daubs of Venice, sunsets, and melons.
 Too many terra cotta tarantellists. Decidedly too many
 gnomes and pixies, and I could dispense with Snow
 White and her Dwarfs. But I have a ground-floor bed-
 room and a comfortable bed, despite which I lie awake for
 some time listening to the rain sogging down on to some
 tarpaulins spread beneath my window. It is pouring this
 morning, and there is nothing to do except wait for G. R.
 and diarise.

A friend of mine, Obadiah Straitlace, to whom I recently
 showed this Diary, implored me to delete the reference to
 Housman. "Don't you realise that the subject bores fifty per
 cent. of your readers and nauseates the other fifty?" Yet
 Obadiah is a model citizen, a town-planner, a conscientious voter,
 and all the rest of it. He also took me to task for my interest in
 pornography. I asked whether he had read Beardsley's *Venus*
and Tannhäuser or knew that Ruskin, on Turner's death,
 destroyed three hundred obscene drawings by the great painter?
 What about Rowlandson? What about our own day? Did he
 realise that our most enchanting master of the modern essay had
 left the finest pornographic library in England? Had a regretted
 novelist selling by the hundred thousand "the mind of a fourth-
 form schoolboy" when he bought Corvo's letters from A. J. A.
 Symons? Should Symons have burned the letters? Had
 he read A. J.'s book on Rolfe? Obadiah said No, he had
 not read it, and if it was the sort of thing he had been led
 to suppose, nothing would induce him to read it. There is
 a passage in *La Muse du Département* in which Balzac
 writes:

A Paris il existe plusieurs espèces de femmes: il y a la
 duchesse et la femme du financier, l'ambassadrice et la femme
 du consul, la femme du ministre qui est ministre et la femme

de celui qui ne l'est plus ; il y a la femme comme il faut de la rive droite et celle de la rive gauche de la Seine ; mais, en province, il n'y a qu'une femme, et cette pauvre femme est la femme de province.

I am driven to the conclusion that in the provinces there is only one kind of man—the provincial. And that Obadiah is a *philosophe de province*. It is the old business of confounding art with morality. To a Frenchman this is preposterous.

G. R., arriving at lunch-time, turned out to be in the late thirties, dark, and the possessor of a beret, an auto-cycle, and a profile like Frank Benson. Worcester College, Oxford. Of Hungarian-Polish extraction with a dash of Jewish blood. Real name Reichardt. Great-nephew of Alexander Reichardt, *Kammersänger* to Prince Esterhazy. We spent a jolly day together, discussing all sorts of things including the old theory that mind is a disease of matter. Told me that he knew A. R. Orage, "who didn't exist. Orage collected brains, but was himself an intellectual vacuum, the calm spot in the centre of a vortex." Strolled about Bournemouth, where every other male person is in uniform and one in three of the young women. All very cheerful in spite of the rain. Lunched at the Norfolk, which was crowded, later on did a music-hall show, which was fair, and supped at Sweeting's, where G. R. bought lashings of an unfamiliar but excellent champagne called Taureau at 25s. a bottle. (What would Mr Pooter have to pay for Jackson Frères to-day ?) Then back to the boarding-house, where we sat talking till three, G. R. confessing that his emotion on meeting me had been half-way between a French child at its first communion and Tennyson crossing the bar. After which he mounted his auto-cycle and rode back to Poole, and I finished entering up these notes. Not bad, seeing that I started the morning with a semi-faint. Realising that it was only the old gastric trouble, I decided not to think about death, and had the strength of mind to resist grisly thoughts throughout the day. Does some foolish reader ask what time I had for introspection since I confess to being busy arguing with G. R. ? Such a reader knows nothing about depression. I am very often at my most seeming-lively when there is a whole row of skeletons performing a *danse macabre* in front of me.

Sept. 7 Golden morning. Decided to lunch at the Brank-
 Sunday. some Tower Hotel. After lunch sat in the garden
 reading the *Journals of George Sturt*, in which I noted
 this passage—Sturt is quoting Thoreau :

“Think of admitting the details of a single case of the criminal court into our thoughts, to stalk profanely through their very *sanctum sanctorum* for an hour, ay, for many hours, to make a very bar-room of the mind’s inmost apartment. . . .”

Shall send Sturt’s book to Obadiah. By the way, will the English never regard Maupassant as something more than a writer of improper stories ? I still have the Complete Works—Conard, 1910, in twenty-nine volumes—noble type on paper water-marked with Maupassant’s signature—to which I was the sole subscriber in the English provinces. All the variants, and some of the contemporary criticism. Here, for example, is Sarcey on *Bel-Ami* (*Nouvelle Revue*, juin 1885).

Je ne sais guère d’ouvrage dont la lecture soit à la fois plus attirante et plus malsaine. En même temps qu’il remue au fond de notre cœur la boue des curiosités perverses, il désenchante de l’humanité et décourage de la vie. A quoi sert demeurer sur cette terre, si elle n’est peuplée que de bas gredins et de coquines infâmes ?

And so on. But what a master—Maupassant, I mean—and what a range ! From the snook-cocking *Rosier de Madame Husson* to the sombre story of the village mayor, “lourd et rouge, fort comme un bœuf,” whose widowerhood and “tempérament fougueux” led him to the rape of la petite Roque and subsequent suicide, from the numberless *contes frivoles* to the story of the horse that was left to starve pegged down in a field of plenty, and that heart-rending little masterpiece, *Châli*. Even the sentimental Axel Munthe goes near to rehabilitating himself with his recognition of Maupassant’s “magnificent brain.” But why does he not stop there ? Munthe knew Maupassant, and in the section devoted to him in *The Story of San Michele* writes :

As I spoke Yvonne woke up, asked half-dazed for another glass of champagne and fell asleep again, her head on his lap. She was a ballet-dancer, barely eighteen, reared by the vicious caresses of some *vieux marcheur* in the coulisses of the Grand Opera, now helplessly drifting to total destruction on board

the *Bel-Ami* in the lap of her terrible lover. I knew that no lifeboat could save her, I knew she would have refused it if I had offered it to her. I knew she had given her heart as well as her body to this insatiable male who had no use for anything except her body.

Here speaks your *philosophe de province*, who refuses to recognise the fact that Maupassant, with his "magnificent brain," could have no possible use for the *mind* of this *rat de l'Opéra*? But once a provincial, always a provincial. The reader who wants to know whether he is tarred with the provincial brush has only to read that passage in Balzac's *La Muse du Département* in which Lousteau takes his mistress Dinah de la Baudraye, who is *enceinte*, to Nathan's first night :

Après le premier acte, Lousteau quitta sa loge et y laissa Dinah seule, exposée au feu de tous les regards, à la clarté de tous les lorgnons, tandis que la baronne de Fontaine et la comtesse Marie de Vandenesse, venues avec Anna, reçurent quelques-uns des hommes les plus distingués du grand monde. La solitude où restait Dinah fut un supplice d'autant plus grand, qu'elle ne sut pas se faire une contenance avec sa lorgnette en examinant les loges ; elle eut beau prendre une pose noble et pensive, laisser son regard dans le vide, elle se sentait trop le point de mire de tous les yeux, elle ne put cacher sa préoccupation, elle fut un peu provinciale, elle étala son mouchoir, elle fit convulsivement des gestes qu'elle s'était interdits.

The reader who knows what Balzac means by "elle fut un peu provinciale" has escaped the dreaded brush. If not, not.

Sept. 9 Sixty-four to-day. Lots of letters and wires, including one which hopes that my works will "survive posterity." A bottle of whisky from my friends downstairs, a necktie from Ted Elliott (*q.v.*), and from Leo the vocal scores of Handel's *Solomon*, *Theodora*, and *Jephtha*. At lunch, where we drank 'black velvet,' he wished me many happy returns with peculiar sincerity : since, as he remarked, if there aren't any he will lose his job. Nothing from Jock !

Writing about *The Importance of Being Earnest* Allan Monkhouse said : " Even in a jocular play we expect the dramatist to

steady himself occasionally and say something about the Union Jack or the sanctity of home." Is it expected of me, in my capacity as diarist, that I should at this point weigh in with the kind of thing a man in the middle sixties ought to be thinking ? I am afraid the reader will be disappointed. All the same, here is a poem from Walt Whitman's *Sands at Seventy*, which I quote now, as it is supremely apposite.

AS I SIT WRITING HERE

As I sit writing here, sick and grown old,
Not my least burden is that dulness of the years, querilities,
Ungracious glooms, aches, lethargy, constipation, whimpering
 ennui,
May filter in my daily songs.

I find myself more and more turning away from philosophy, which in an amateur is merely guess-work. Re-reading Conrad's *Lord Jim* the other day, I was once again struck with the ending : "Stein has aged greatly of late. He feels it himself, and says often that he is 'preparing to leave all this ; preparing to leave . . .' while he waves his hand sadly at his butterflies." I spent this afternoon re-arranging my collection of horse photographs, removing everything else, and plastering the walls of my study with them. I propose to wave my hand at them from time to time while banishing all thoughts of leaving them.

Sept. 10 Tom Gamble is an exponent of the philosophy of *Wednesday*. perfect contentment. As Private Spuddy he is conscious of being the salt of the earth, and of having all earth's sweets in his grasp as well. Whoever wants more is Putting It On. This grand performance, which I saw at the Bedford to-night, is an epitome of homely joys, contents, and such minor dissatisfactions as must be accounted part of the daily round. Here is a superficially comic, latently pathetic actor with the gift of thinking aloud, and that power of wondering with which Lamb credited his old actor. Hear Private Spuddy on the meaning of work as seen by a worker. He is out of the Army, has taken a job as a waiter, and is haranguing his employer. "If you're going to be my guv'nor, be my guv'nor," he says. "If not, tell me, and I'll get some one else. You're only the boss. *I work here !* "

Sept. 12 Greatness in acting requires a combination of things
Friday. not all of which are under the artist's control.

Enough height and not too much ; beauty, or if not beauty, then the power to suggest it ; brains and the ability to conceal them ; physical health and the nervous system of an ox ; indomitable spirit and natural grit ; the flair for the right opportunity ; luck or the knack of turning bad luck to account ; a ruthless capacity to trample on all competing talents ; *a complete lack of interest in the drama except in so far as it provides the actor with striking parts.* In addition to all this the great player, male or female, must possess that indefinable something which makes the ordinary man abase himself without knowing why. When, after her performance of Pelléas in Macterlinck's play at the Theatre Royal, Manchester, Sarah Bernhardt walked through the winter garden of the Midland Hotel supported by two Florentine lackeys, hard-headed cotton manufacturers who had never heard of her stood up and removed their bowler hats, and common stockbrokers, abashed and open-mouthed, left their stories in the air.

Sept. 15 Came across this in De Quincey :
Monday.

Woman, sister—there are some things which you do not execute as well as your brother, man ; no, nor ever will. Pardon me if I doubt whether you will ever produce a great poet from your choirs, or a Mozart, or a Phidias, or a Michael Angelo, or a great philosopher, or a great scholar. By which last is meant—not one who depends simply on an infinite memory, but also on an infinite and electric power of combination ; bringing together from the four winds, like the angel of the resurrection, what else were dust from dead men's bones, into the unity of breathing life. If you *can* create yourselves into any of these great creators, why have you not ?

Let us look at some of these females in the playwriting world. There was Aphra Behn, of whom I am ashamed to say I never read a line. There was Susannah Centlivre, dismissed by Swinburne as being "dull as dishwater and monotonous as a bagpipe." There was Mrs Inchbald, who wrote nineteen stage plays the very names of which are now dust. There was Joanna Baillie, who, having drawn up a list of the human passions—

Hate, Jealousy, Fear, Love, and so forth—proclaimed her intention of writing a tragedy and a comedy round each of them. Scott made the mistake of praising one of these productions, after which she never let the poor man alone, so that he dreaded looking into the Abbotsford letter-box. Even my darling Mitford saw nothing ridiculous in the notion of a genteel country-woman putting a Rienzi or a Charles I through his stage paces; Macready tried to bring one of her tragedies to life, and failed. In the last century they all dabbled in the theatre, including Mrs Hemans with some nonsense called *The Vespers of Palermo*. George Eliot couldn't let it alone; not even her consort, G. H. Lewes, could prevent the publication of her drama in blank verse, *The Spanish Gypsy*. The great and honourable and sensible exceptions to this theatre-itch were the Brontës and Jane Austen. Women playwrights to-day are better than they ever have been, especially in America.

Sept. 19 Friday. Am in a quandary about Leo. Some little time ago, when I was faced with having to cut seventy thousand words out of the Diary, I had the notion of submitting the MS. to three friends of widely different tastes and asking them to say which parts of it bored them. A. declined, saying it was my own responsibility, but that, judging from previous *Egos*, I should delete anything having to do with Leo Pavia. B. said he didn't think it mattered what I did provided there was no mention of Leo Pavia. C. wired "Cut Leo Pavia." In a way, I sympathise; I feel the same way about the intrusions of Festing Jones in the Note Books of Samuel Butler, with this difference, that Jones is merely a stooge to Butler, and I have never regarded Leo in that light. Hair shirt, thorn in the flesh if you will, but not stooge. Probably the fault lies in my *presentation* of a man who is a great character in the novelist's sense, half genius and half zany. However, I shall keep on with him. My cast is dwindling, and I cannot afford to lose my remaining comedian.

Sept. 21 Sunday. Since dithyramping about animals is the vogue, have amused myself *à la* Munthe writing the life history of my pet nannygoat. How she would butt me with her horns until I desisted from work and stroked her thin beard.

(Do female goats have horns and beards ?) How I would take her for a daily walk on the slopes of Swiss Cottage and think myself no more ridiculous than Gérard de Nerval with his pet lobster. How when I was ill she would lay her chin on the coverlet and tend me back to health. How sadly I would drown the least promising of her many litters. (Do goats have litters ?) How I called her Nanine, after Marguerite Gautier's nurse. How distressing was her last illness, and how heart-breaking were her *funérailles*. Have pigeon-holed the preposterous thing, to be inserted in *Ego 5*, if George Harrap thinks it will help the sale. Like the prayer Rossini stuck in *Moses in Egypt*.

Even so, I doubt whether these diaries of mine will ever be really popular. I just cannot and will not take the Axel Munthe line :

If this book has turned out to be an Autobiography, I begin to believe that, judging from the sale of it, the simplest way to write a book about oneself consists in trying as hard as one can to think of somebody else. All a man has to do is to sit still in a chair by himself and look back upon his life with his blind eye. Better still would be to lie down in the grass and not think at all, only to listen. Soon the distant roar of the world dies away, and the forests and fields begin to sing with clear bird voices, friendly animals come up to tell him their joys and their sorrows in sounds and words that he can understand.

I see. The birds and beasts stop talking their lingo and start talking Munthe's. And again :

"I am afraid he is very bad," said the old gentleman in quite a different voice, tenderly caressing the emaciated face of his monkey. "I do not know what I shall do if he dies, he is my only friend. I have brought him up on the bottle since he was a baby, his dear mother died when she gave birth to him. She was almost as big as a gorilla, you never saw such a darling, she was quite human."

"She was quite human." It is this passion for treating animals as if they were something else that I find so repellent. Joseph Mayer said of the painter Stubbs that he was good "because his animals have that expression which belongs to their kind and no other. He refused to illustrate a human feeling and never showed an immortal soul in a poodle's eye." You

ask why a dog should not have an immortal soul. I see no reason. The error lies in supposing that such possession turns him into something non-doggy.

The point is beautifully made by the Goncourts in their account in *Manette Salomon* of Anatole's pet monkey, Vermillon, the description of whose death is a masterpiece. But a masterpiece of strictly animal pathos underlined and accentuated by what immediately follows :

"Tiens ! Il pleure ! . . . Anatole qui pleure vraiment ! " fit Manette.

Une larme venait de tomber de la joue d'Anatole sur le cadavre du singe, et le jour la faisait briller au bout d'un poil.

"Moi, je pleure ?" . . . fit Anatole honteux, et se dépêchant de sécher sa larme avec du cynisme : " Ah sapristi, j'ai oublié de lui demander s'il voulait un prêtre. . . . "

And I reflect how blessedly far this is from Munthe and his semi-human baboon.

Sept. 22 "Margin is everything," said Mrs Erlynne in the *Monday*. Wilde play. I hear from Harrap that the restrictions on paper have been tightened up, and that a decree has gone forth insisting that each page shall contain so many words. This means an end to the "neat rivulet of text meandering through a meadow of margin."

Sept. 23 James Heddle died yesterday. Was sent to work at *Tuesday*. the age of eleven, when he delivered milk in a Glasgow suburb at one-and-threepence a week, and told me that he thought of this every time he saw a taxi-meter register one-and-three. A little man with a round face and large spectacles through which he looked at life eagerly, boyishly and with an unimpaired zest, although for the last ten years he had been an invalid condemned to spend weeks and sometimes months on his back. Retirement irked him, and he sought to keep in touch with the newspaper world through reminiscence and stories of old stunts and bygone scoops that were always a little long and sometimes a little tedious. But it was a point of affection to listen to them. Jimmie possessed not a dual mind but a single one so all-embracing that it combined the gangsterish

direction of the popular press with the contributions of paragraphs to the London Letter of the *Manchester Guardian*. He was the soul of generosity, and his epitaph might well be Kipling's

Help me to need no aid from men
That I may help such men as need.

Sept. 24 How odd theatrical producers are! Take the *Wednesday*. scene in the third act of *A Doll's House* (Archer's translation):

RANK. But I'm quite forgetting what I came for. Helmer, give me a cigar, one of the dark Havanas.

HELMER. With the greatest pleasure. (*Hands case.*)

RANK (*takes one and cuts the end off*). Thanks.

NORA (*striking a wax match*). Let me give you a light.

RANK. A thousand thanks.

(*She holds match. He lights his cigar at it.*)

RANK. And now, good-bye!

HELMER. Good-bye, good-bye, my dear fellow.

NORA. Sleep well, Dr Rank.

RANK. Thanks for the wish.

NORA. Wish me the same.

RANK. You? Very well, since you ask me—Sleep well; and thanks for the light.

Obviously "thanks for the light" is addressed to Nora, and refers to the sympathy with which she has relieved his melancholy. In a notice of the recent production of this play I asked what the producer meant by allowing *Helmer* to light the Doctor's cigar? "The whole point of 'Thanks for the light' is that it is addressed to Nora." A week or two later I saw the play again. Helmer was still lighting Rank's cigar, and Rank was still thanking Helmer.

Athene Seyler, the Madame Ranevsky in the current production of *The Cherry Orchard*, is an artist of a different calibre. I complained that in the third act she wore in her hair a silly little diamond ornament which bobbed when she said Yes, shook when she said No, and quivered when she said nothing. Postcard from Bournemouth this morning in which George Richards tells me the ornament has been deleted. Good for Athene! G. R. suggests that the play ought to have a short fifth act showing the family coming back from the station after missing the train.

Sept. 25 *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* is rich in things
Thursday. apt to the times. The whole of the Civil Service is
 in Arnold of Rugby's "What we must look for
 here is, 1st, religious and moral principles : 2ndly, gentlemanly
 conduct : 3rdly, intellectual ability."

Sept. 26 Came across this to-day :
Friday.

I still knew how to love, but I realised I had no longer the delicacy that I had had in those earlier days, nor the feelings which really justify the transports of the senses, nor the same tender ways, nor finally a certain probity which extends itself even to one's weaknesses ; but what frightened me was to have to acknowledge that I no longer possessed the same vigour.

Obadiah Straitlace himself must approve the intellectual honesty of this. Even though the author is Casanova.

Sept. 28 A highly coloured but untrue picture of life in the
Sunday. third year of the war could be made out of a cunning
 selection of items culled from the personal columns of
The Times over a period. What is fair is to extract some of the
 items in a single issue. Here is a selection made from that of
 Wednesday last week :

MINIATURE of MRS SIDDONS painted on chicken skin by Josephs, R.A., for SALE ; seen in Cheltenham by appointment.

TO COLLECTORS and DEALERS. Early 18th-century MS. Book ; contents unknown ; particulars supplied. What offers ?

MIRACLE ? No ! Metempsychose ? Kettner's Restaurant a retrouvé en LA CIGALE une vie NOUVELLE ; did you know it ? Lunch, dinner, supper, also on Sundays.

MUST you remain in London ? Then why don't you come to live at PORCHESTER GATE, London's Flats with the unique view and the most marvellous AIR RAID SHELTERS ?

FUR COAT. White Russian ermine, specially selected skins ; full-length, unique model ; accept 250 gns.

PENNILESS LADY, 62, sacrificed career to nurse for eight years invalid aunt through fatal illness. Left with shattered health, quite destitute. Please help.

BULL MASTIFF DOG, pedigree, eight championships ; free in return for good home ; perfect dog for regimental mascot,

Sept. 30 Tuesday. Am getting on. Top table at Foyle's luncheon to-day, though I should explain that it was a very long table. One thousand people present. Sat next to Lady Oxford, who was in great form. "Manchester is in Yorkshire, isn't it?" "Gladstone had a great sense of humour, but his temper wouldn't let him show it. He was not a humbug; his mind was cut on the cross, like my skirt." "Lloyd George? There is no Lloyd George. There is a marvellous brain; but if you were to shut him in a room and look through the keyhole there would be nobody there."

Oct. 1 Wednesday. Letter from Jock saying that he has placed his first book *Preludes and Studies* with Macmillan. Sends me a superb example of *l'esprit de l'escalier*. Why on the first night of *Thunder Rock* did he not remember Sam Weller's "Anythin' for a quiet life, as the man said when he took the sitivation at the lighthouse"?

Oct. 2 Thursday. I have yet to meet the Englishman who would endorse Balzac's "Le cerveau n'obéit qu'à ses propres lois, il ne reconnaît ni les nécessités de la vie, ni les commandements de l'honneur; on ne produit pas une belle œuvre parce qu'une femme expire, ou pour payer des dettes déshonorantes, ou pour nourrir des enfants."

Oct. 3 Friday. Letter from Brother Harry:

Can nothing be done to prevent those-who-should-know-better from making asses of themselves? One of our bishops has just stated that *we* must revise *our* opinions of the benefits conferred on the Russians by the Soviet régime. Bad enough to have used "I" and "my." Personally, I strongly object to being included in any such revision. I have nothing to revise.

Why the surprise at the Russian resistance? What did people expect? Collapse? Revolt? How could anybody expect the first, when Russia has so obviously been perfecting her war arm for the past twelve or fourteen years? What about those first paratroops, and the descent on a single airfield of ten thousand fully equipped soldiers? As for the

second, don't people realise that the Russian peasant now lives for the first time ? This being so, was it not reasonable to suppose that he would fight to the end for the right to continue in his new life ?

I do not pretend that "Ogpu" as a collection of vocables is more pleasing to my ear than "Gestapo." I respect a person who says, "I have considered the Soviet system, find it pernicious, and hold its general adoption not to the benefit of mankind." I may not agree, but I do not quarrel with a man who has taken the trouble to make himself informed. Thousands with no facilities other than those afforded by the local public library have been able to piece together something of the Russian jig-saw. The bland confession of ignorance by those who have a moral obligation to learn the facts—this frightens me more than any invasion.

Oct. 6 Centenary of Clement Scott, born one hundred years ago to-day. He belonged to no set, and his name does not crop up in the letters and autobiographies of the period. He waxed his moustache, wore a moss rose in his buttonhole, sat for a quarter of a century in a box at theatres, and pontificated torrentially in next morning's *Daily Telegraph*. His writings have perished. Sir Tumly Snuffin would have said of Scott what he said of Mrs Wititterly, "His complaint is soul."

As a reporter Scott was excellent. He goes to see Irving's Hamlet and writes :

How is he dressed, and how does he look ? No imitation of the portrait of Sir Thomas Lawrence, no funereal velvet, no elaborate trappings, no Order of the Danish Elephant, no flaxen wig after the model of M. Fechter, no bugles, no stilted conventionality. We see before us a man and a prince . . . so well dressed that nothing distracts the eye from the wonderful face.

At the end of the first act he notes :

Mr Irving is missing his points, he is neglecting his opportunities. Betterton's face turned as white as his neckcloth when he saw the ghost. Garrick thrilled the house when he followed the spirit. . . . There are others who generously observe that Hamlets are not judged by the first act ; but over all, disputants or enthusiasts, has already been thrown an indescribable spell.

A wonderful face which casts a spell. . . . This is simple writing, but it brings back Irving as he looked on the stage on the thirty-first of October, 1874. Intellectually half-way between George Augustus Sala and George R. Sims, Scott was by no means without instruction. Returning to the *Telegraph* office after Irving's first night he shakes down from his sleeve Goethe and Taine; no practising critic will hold it against him that he had put them there while dressing.

Oct. 8 For some unexplained reason I feel well to-day, but
Wednesday. really well, as I used to feel in the summer holidays when I was a boy. I feel that I could go out and fight a battle, without worrying overmuch whether I should come back. I have always understood and sympathised with Spintho's remark in *Androcles and the Lion*, which I quote from memory: "I mean to die in the arena like a martyr and go to heaven. But not to-day. Not until my nerves are better."

Oct. 9 An unknown friend sends me a copy of an old
Thursday. magazine in order that I may peruse an unsigned article on the Italian opera of the period. It is a good article, but next to it I come across real treasure trove. This is an essay in which the author asks: How is it that certain nations are notoriously humourless?

If Frenchmen have ceased to be humorous since Rabelais and Montaigne, it is because they are the keenest of logicians. If Germans are not humorous, it is because they love sentiment too heartily to laugh at it. If the Scotch are not humorous, it is because the Puritan conception of the world realises the solemnity of life, and scorns all trifling with its awful realities.

When you come to actors, genuine and fil:n, a new element introduces itself, which is the person of the player. I have known actors interpose their dull selves between us and Shakespeare, so that the wildest nonsense of Dogberry and Verges has been deprived of its fun. This matter of a comedian's personality is entirely incalculable. I have been the only unmoved person in a vast audience doubled up with laughter at George Formby, Junr., Arthur Askey, Harold Lloyd, and Eddie Cantor, all of whom I have found monumentally unfunny. As against this a very clever friend of mine has never been able to raise a smile at

Leslie Henson, Alfred Drayton and Robertson Hare, Nervo and Knox, Laurel and Hardy, all of whom I consider comic geniuses of the first water. On one point my friend and I agree. This is the Marx Brothers, among whom Groucho rouses us to the highest point of intellectual risibility while the others plunge us into despair. A nice point here presents itself. Have there ever been comedians whom *everybody* thought funny? In my experience these number six—Arthur Roberts, G. P. Huntley, Little Tich, George Robey, Charlie Chaplin, and Grock. Even so, some of these outlived their comicality. I remember the last appearance of Tich. To my eyes he was as funny as ever. He made the same jokes with the same perfection of timing. He had moulted no feather of oddity or drollery. But the audience was a new one, and appeared disappointed not to find in the English comedian the American wisecracking which was just coming into fashion. He failed to get a hand.

Oct. 11 Note from Harrap's saying that in the last six
Saturday. months *Ego* 4 has earned me £18 8s. 10d. But that
 I have given away copies to the value of £15 12s. 8d.
Balance in *their* favour £2 8s. 5d. "Corn," said Mrs Micawber,
"may be gentlemanly, but it is not remunerative." The same
applies to the writing of autobiographies.

Oct. 14 Last night I had to meet a young man who wants to
Tuesday. know what I think of his singing. A professional
 accompanist had been engaged so that I should be
impressed and hail the young man as a second Gigli. With a
skill which Talleyrand never approached I managed to get away
without any expression of opinion whatever. But Leo told me
beforehand that I had no need to worry, and that such cases are
quite simple. "If the young man has no voice you say he has
talent; if he has no talent you say he has a good voice; if he
has neither you say he has charm; and if he happens to be well
off you congratulate him on possessing all three."

Oct. 15 Received an invitation to be one of forty-five con-
Wednesday. tributors to a symposium on the post-war recon-
 struction of This, That, and the Other, the section
allotted to me being the Theatre. I am quite the wrong person

to approach : my view is that either the war will have no effect whatever on the theatre, or that it will decentralise it. This latter means one of two things ; either enormously sincere but not very good actresses will go tearing up and down the country in the more tedious masterpieces, or a rash of local repertory will break out. I am not interested. As a young man in Manchester I saw enough of repertory to last my lifetime. I enjoy village cricket, but draw the line at village acting. Am therefore declining the invitation.

Oct. 19 Sunday. The Brains Trust. Joad gives one the impression of not having stopped talking since the last meeting. To-day he talked an awful lot of what I regard as nonsense about astrology. That a friend of his who was totally ignorant of the subject had deputed for one week on a Sunday paper was put forward as a reason why astrology must be "bunk." The old business of discrediting spiritualism because of fake mediums ! Joad went from bad to worse when he said that the basis of astrology is the assumption that the stars exist for the benefit of humanity. Nobody has ever claimed this. The fact that the barometer tells men and women when to take their umbrella, and when not, does not mean that rain and shine exist for the *benefit* of humanity. No more has been claimed for astrology than that it is a barometer. I, too, regard astrology as bunk. But that is because I hold even the genuine practitioner to be deceived.

Oct. 24 Friday. Letter from a soldier in Iceland describing the life there as dull, dull, dull. Dull to the verge of paralysing mind and body. Can I suggest anything to relieve the tedium ? Am sending the young man a cutting from the *Manchester Guardian's* entirely humourless Nature Notes :

I wonder how many of our troops in Iceland realised their fortune in being stationed in summer where the harlequin duck, pink-footed goose, and both phalaropes nest.

Oct. 27 Monday. My dear godson, Tony Baerlein, has been killed. He crashed on returning from a successful raid over Germany. Almost his first action. He had a first-class mind, and his manners were as modest as his brain was

comprehensive. He had the makings of a good journalist, was intensely lovable, and even in Fleet Street had not a single enemy. "A spirit goes out of the man who means execution, which outlives the most untimely ending. All who have meant good work with their whole hearts have done good work, although they may die before they have the time to sign it."

Oct. 28 Went with George Mathew to Port Sunlight to address *Tuesday.* nine thousand soap-boilers. I had visualised a soap factory as a Vulcan's stithy, with huskies stripped to the waist stirring chunks of blubber in vats of boiling petroleum by means of barge-poles. What I actually saw was two thousand natty young women dressed in white and smelling like a hedge in spring. The talk was relayed to the huskies, whom I did not see. Am told it went well, though in view of the young ladies there were excisions.

Oct. 30 My book *Thursdays and Fridays* published. *Thursday.*

Oct. 31 Had this note in the *D.E.* to-day about Meric *Friday.* Dobson:

Will somebody please tell me the address of the Ministry for Round Pegs in Square Holes?

I know a young man aged 24, British, Scholar of King's College, Cambridge, Honours degree. Talks, reads, and writes French, German, Italian, Arabic, Persian, and a little Russian. I first met my friend at Oxford, where his job was making abstracts from Arabic newspapers for the use of the Government.

He is now an ordinary seaman, and I hold that a young man with these qualifications should be doing something more valuable than peeling potatoes in a ship's galley. In the unlikely event of the appropriate person at the Admiralty being interested, I am ready with the young man's name and ship.

But it will be useless. Scotland's most promising young painter asked me how he could do camouflage instead of roofing. I had the ear of the appropriate official at the War Office. But as some one else had possession of his mind, nothing happened.

At four o'clock this afternoon the Admiralty rang up.

Nov. 1 Jock sends me this about Tony Baerlein :
Saturday.

88 King Street
Covent Garden
W.C.2

31st October 1941

DEAR JAMIE,

Unfortunately no! I don't appear to have kept a single letter of Tony's. He dashed off this inscription to me in the copy of his fantasy, *Daze the Magician*, which he gave me on his first—and last—publication day. This runs :

“ To JOCK
FROM TONY

“ partly on account of a telephone conversation about Vermeer in which we both managed to refrain from mentioning Bergotte, partly because I never took him to see Toumanova suspended on a wire, and more especially from sheer vanity.

“ August 1936 ”

The allusions are to Proust and to Russian Ballet, and the whole gives me a faint yet piercing savour of the boy's gracious and charming personality. I hear you exclaim, “ Come, come ! ‘ Faint yet piercing ’ ? ” But that is what I mean. Several of Debussy's piano preludes are both : and indeed there was something altogether Debussy-ish about Tony's nature.

I am losing too many of my friends in this dire war. But Tony is the first airman, and his death, as such, has its own peculiar poignancy. I suppose there is some comfort in this, which I found the other day in the British Museum when I was looking for something else. It is from a letter in *The Times*, Dec. 4, 1916, on the death of the forty-year-old Lord Lucas, who was killed while flying over the German lines in France :

“ There was a touch of other-worldliness about him, even before he became an airman ; after that I think it is there with all of them ; you see it in the puzzled smile with which they regard those of us who live below. Rather a sad face at times, as if he thought the world was not so fine a place as he wished it was. . . . Up to the end an untamed thing that no one had flung a net over. Boys adored him—for his gallantry I suppose, gallant being the first and last adjective for him—and I have often been amused by the slavish way in which they imitated him. . . .

“ Every one who knew him will be glad that if he had to die,

he died in the air. It is an assurance to them that he was happy to the last, pursuing and pursued up there, exulting in it all, even in the last moment when he had the supreme experience. No ill-will, I am sure, to whoever brought him down, but rather a wave of the hand from one airman to another. There is still that sort of chivalry on both sides in the sky. Having had a very good life, in the years he spent on the ground, they nevertheless seemed strange and stupid to him after his first flight. He came down a different man from the one who went up, and was different ever afterwards, as if he had made a journey into the springtime of the world and brought back a breath of it. This is what it is to be a true airman; you may see the same look in all their faces. It is not to be wondered at that so many of them fly away and never come back. . . ."

I dare say Barrie's pen—yes, it is signed "J. M. B."—is running away with him here as it often did. As everybody's does, from Tennyson downwards, when he or she has a grief! I am quite agnostical about it. Is an airman's death a "supreme experience," or is it just a bang, a yell, a horror of flaming petrol, and a more or less quick oblivion? I just don't know. I only know that I liked our Tony much, and that I miss him now—far more than I missed his absences when he was alive. He always treated me with a delicate, amused, but not unflattering kind of courtesy. He always smiled at my patronage, my foibles, my excesses even. The same goes for *your* p., f., and e. And he stayed warmly aloof. He was detached. He was gentle—the rarest quality in these days.

Always your

JOCK

Nov. 8 Heard this story of the fine Greek actress, Paxinou.
Monday. On fire to play Mrs Alving she sent for "X," a well-known theatre-manager, and made the proposal to him at the Savoy Hotel, coiled on a Louis Seize sofa *à la* Serpent-of-old-Nile and biting a flower *à la* Carmen, her arms cinct with diamond bracelets. Naturally "X" did not see her as Mrs A. "Come to tea at my flat to-morrow," she commanded. "X" duly presenting himself, the flat door was opened by a dour, hard-faced creature with hair brushed back and possessed of as much glamour as Sybil's Jane Clegg. "I want to see Madame Paxinou," said "X." And received the reply: "*I am* Madame Paxinou *as* Mrs Alving. Now do I play *Ghosts*?"

Nov. 4 Going through some old papers this morning I find a
Tuesday. letter which has lost its head and tail. No date and
 no signature, though I suspect a charming lady.

. . . my favourite among six or seven aliases. Rather neat, I think—plain, matter of fact, and yet not devoid of euphony and a certain airiness, although so far it has brought me no more luck than any of the others. As far as my journalistic struggles go I am like the man who wrote :

If I sold shrouds
 No one would die ;
 If I sold lamps then in the sky
 The sun, in my despite,
 Would shine all night.

I know of about half a dozen actors and actresses with *pleasant* (not thrilling) voices ; the rest speak in the hard and horn-rimmed accents of wireless announcers—when they are not definitely raucous or plummy. People tell me of the voice of Wilson Barrett and the voice of Lewis Waller, and their eyes go all awed and holy and retrospective ; and you write of Ellen Terry's voice " like the heart of a red rose." That is the sort I've been waiting all my life to hear.

I want to argue with you about a lot of things, but will limit myself to one. You say, apropos of ballet, something like " When people are given voices why do they have to make signs ? " Personally I think it would be far better if miming were adopted as a general means of communication ; if you lived in a flat surrounded by other people's wireless which blares from 9 A.M. until 12 P.M. of the merits of Smith's soaps, Jones's shaving creams, and Robinson's razors, you would think so too. Sometimes I find myself running around in circles murmuring :

High o'er the fence leaps Sunny Jim
 Force is the food that something somethinged him.

I've never caught the middle of the line.

Yes, of course you may do what you like with my letter—send it to the British Museum, frame it, or distribute copies to Natives, *à la* Queen Victoria and Bibles, if you wish. Naturally, I am overjoyed to think that anyone appreciates my literary style and grim grammatical lapses enough to . . .

Nov. 5 *Other People's Houses*, to-night's new play at the
Wednesday. Ambassadors, is Euripidean. At least I find a
 smack of something Greek in an elderly gentleman
 philandering with his stepson's mistress in a park at two in the

morning. But who are we, as the late A. J. A. Symons would have asked, to circumscribe the actions of philanderers in parks at such hours? The young lady in question is an evacuee, always alluded to by her Cockney ma as "Mother's Girl" and obviously descended from "Lillie-Girl," who, the faithful will remember, became Lupin's bride. An amusing evening, with some superb comedy by Olive Walter and Esma Cannon, and unselfish support by Marie Löhr and Phyllis Dare.

Nov. 8 Came across this witty thing from *The Saturday Saturday*. *Review* in its palmy days of fifty years ago. It said of some legal luminary that he had "all the qualities of a great judge—he was slow, he was courteous, he was wrong." This is the opposite of me, who am rapid, rude, and right.

Nov. 10 It is exactly two hundred years since Horace Walpole *Monday*. wrote to Sir Horace Mann at Florence, "I have been two or three times to the play, very unwillingly; for nothing was ever so bad as the actors, except the company. There is much in vogue here a Mrs Woffington, a bad actress; but she has life." I sometimes wonder whether taste in the last century was not more sensible than it is now. To-day people seem to need a centenary, or something fussily relevant, before they will consent to read about a bygone actress; I am agog at all times for pictures of Bracegirdle, Barry, Oldfield, Pritchard. The taste to-day is for what Zoffany painted, and not what Hazlitt drew.

Nov. 11 Hazlitt calls attention to the fact that Campbell in *Tuesday*. his

Like angel-visits, few and far between,
not only cribbed from, but worsened Blair's

Like those of angels, short, and far between.
Its visits

P. P. Howe has a note on Hazlitt's folly in making this point in view of the fact that Campbell was to be Hazlitt's principal editor for the remaining nine years of his life. I am afraid I have

done much the same thing in *Thursdays and Fridays*, in the preface to which I say that to write for the *Daily Express* readers "reviews in the manner of the *Times Lit. Supp.*, the *New Statesman*, and the big Sunday papers would not only be useless—they would not be printed." In fact I have gone one better than Hazlitt in a letter I wrote at the beginning of this month to G. W. Stonier, the *New Statesman*'s principal reviewer. In this I say :

I am looking forward with interest to the *New Statesman*'s review of my *Thursdays and Fridays* published this week. In this I claim to have done something at which clever people like Pritchett and yourself have not failed, but which you have never attempted. This is to interest bus-conductors, clerks, and shop assistants in good books and good plays. I once kept a shop, and I discovered that when I ran out of *Daily Expresses* and, rather than disappoint my customer, offered him *The Times* at the same price, he wouldn't have it, but preferred to go without a newspaper altogether. Experience had taught him that he just couldn't understand *The Times*. And people who can't understand *The Times* certainly can't comprehend the *New Statesman*, or they think they can't, which comes to the same thing. That, in my view, is no reason why they should not be told what books to read and what plays to see.

I receive an enormous number of letters from young men and women all over the country, particularly in the Forces, showing that their interest has been genuinely stirred. It is to this public that *Thursdays and Fridays* is addressed. If your reviewer finds that in this book I address that public unworthily, or that my recommendations tend to vulgarise that public's taste, then I promise you that you will hear no word from me. That will be his opinion, and he is entitled to it. But if he condemns my book because it is not couched in the idiom of the *New Statesman*, why then you *will* hear from me. To judge any work by standards which that work does not envisage is uncritical.

Nov. 15 Went down to Brighton for a performance at the
Saturday. Theatre Royal in aid of entertainments for Sussex
soldiers. My part was to auction a book of auto-
graphs left me by Clare Greet. It fetched £41. Sat up very late
listening to Leslie Henson in the lounge of the Old Ship. Leslie
said :

"Like all comedians, I am a melancholic. When I am among

strangers who are prepared to let me be funny, I can be very funny for a couple of hours, after which I rush home and indulge my natural gloom. The people I can't stick are the well-meaning idiots who say, 'Here's Leslie, now *we've* got to be funny'! This means that I say nothing, bite my knuckles, and think of the gas-oven." I sympathise. The moment a man gets the reputation of being a wit, every fool thinks that he too must display waggyery. Harry Tate dealt perfectly with this kind. I remember one such ass coming up to him and Morris Harvey and saying, "Have you heard this one?" Harry said, "Yes, but Morris hasn't." And escaped.

Nov. 17 Supped with Gwen Chenhalls, the only other guest *Monday.* being Lady Oxford. Recalling a dinner with Coquelin in the late 'eighties, Lady O. said that the French actor justified his performance in *The Bells* by saying, "Irving would have been arrested twice a week: my innkeeper would never have been detected." Half-way through the meal she threw herself into an exquisite Pre-Raphaelite pose, saying, "That was Ellen Terry playing Lady Macbeth, supposed to be clumsy, square, red-headed, and Scotch."

Nov. 28 Jack Bergel, dramatic critic of the *Evening News*, *Sunday.* was killed in a flying accident last week at the age of thirty-nine. I write in the *S.T.* to-day:

Life for John Graham Bergel was a bundle of leaping flames—music, the theatre, French and Russian films, Rugby football, good wine, motor-racing, bridge, golf. He would talk about the latest aeroplane engine in terms of the finale to Mozart's Jupiter Symphony, and very nearly about the symphony in terms of the internal-combustion engine. But I think that if you had asked him what he enjoyed most he would have said talk; he could not endure to be silent. He resembled that Fleeming Jenkin of whom Stevenson wrote: "The point about him is his extraordinary readiness and spirit. You can propound nothing but he has either a theory about it ready-made, or will have one instantly on the stocks, and proceed to lay its timbers and launch it in your presence. 'Let me see,' he will say. 'Give me a moment, I *should* have some theory for that.' " With this difference, that Jack would not have required the moment; his stream of mind kept pace with his spate of chatter.

One Sunday morning shortly after the outbreak of war he called on me ostensibly to propose a day in the country but actually to obtain confirmation from an older colleague on a matter about which he was greatly exercised. Too young for the last war and not wanting to miss this, should he jettison his career and follow his instincts? *Where did his duty lie?* I held, rightly or wrongly, that in time of stress Fleet Street has need of its best-tempered brains, and that he must resist the romantic impulse. Some months later I learned that he was making desperate efforts to get into the Air Force. Continually turned down, he embraced the Air Ferry Service with passion. On his leaves he was gay and happy, while envisaging the probabilities. A confirmed realist, in this dedication of himself he became something of a mystic. Of him, too, as of his young Irish airman, Yeats might have written:

Nor law, nor duty bade me fight,
Nor public men, nor cheering crowds,
A lonely impulse of delight
Drove to this tumult in the clouds;
I balanced all, brought all to mind,
The years to come seemed waste of breath,
A waste of breath the years behind
In balance with this life, this death.

Except that it was a nicely balanced sense of duty which sent Jack Bergel into the sky and gave his life its perfect fulfilment.

Nov. 24 I was glancing for no accountable reason into the *Monday. Annals of Agriculture* for 1791, and in Arthur Young's *Tours through England and Wales* found this passage about Shakespeare's birthplace:

They shew the poet's chair in a chimney corner; Mrs Jordan, of Drury-Lane Theatre, kneeling down, kissing this chair, is become one of the chief anecdotes of the place. In the town hall there is a very bad picture, by a very good painter, Garrick embracing the bust of Shakespeare, by Gainsborough: a much better one of the poet in his study, by Wilson, given by Garrick. There is no other person perhaps in the *Biographia Britannica* whose birth has shed such a lustre on the place of his nativity, as the deer-stealer of Stratford. Bacon, Newton, and Milton were as great in their respective paths as Shakespeare in his: but they do not interest the universal feeling. Coals, 11½d. per cwt., lime, 2s. 6d. quarter, 10 quarters are spread per acre, and much mixed by dung and mould.

Dec. 8 Oh for a Hazlitt to put a stop to speeches from the *Wednesday*. stage! I cite Hazlitt because it was he who laid down the principle that "Professed critics should be shy of putting themselves forward to applaud loudly," a law which professional critics still obey. This comes from the essay denying actors the right of appearing in public in their private capacity. "They had better keep out of the way, the acts and sentiments emanating from them will not carry on the illusion of our prepossessions." The objection to these modern first-night speeches is that they keep actors *in* the way, to our disillusion and their detriment. They line up, and where there were kings and queens, satyrs and mænads more or less frenzied, are hired actors and actresses forced to undergo the humiliation of being praised to their faces. Your player who, a moment ago, held an empire in his hand now comes forward and in the cringing tones of a waiter at a banquet tells you that he is "going now," and hopes his efforts have been satisfactory.

Dec. 5 Mozart dying one hundred and fifty years ago to-day, *Friday*. the *Times* critic again mounts his hobby-horse. (See my entry for August 28, 1940.) Because he approves of Mozart he must disapprove of Wagner, thus committing the first of all critical errors, that of running down one good thing in order to praise another.

Music does not consist in torrents and cataracts of sound bearing down all opposition, overwhelming the senses, but in fineness of outline and delicacy of tone-colour, hinting at emotions deeply felt but not wallowing in the display of them, touching seriousness with humour and enriching gaiety with thought.

What the writer should have said is: "*All* music does not consist in torrents," and "*Some* music consists in fineness of outline."

Dec. 11 I don't think you can make a war play by writing a *Thursday*. first-class part for Gladys Henson as a London charwoman, running up a Croninesque plot about a doctor, and trying to get home with prayers in the Welsh idiom. To-night's audience obviously didn't agree with me, and

I shan't be surprised if Emlyn Williams's *The Morning Star* runs a year. The play is an attempt to bend Sean O'Casey's bow, and Emlyn just can't do it. *Juno and the Paycock* and *The Plough and the Stars*, being works of art, will be played long after Ireland has ceased from troubling. The peace will bring no revivals of Emlyn's play.

Dec. 12 Friday. Osbert Sitwell has a phrase which exactly hits off what most people are thinking about Japan. "I am filled with horror at all those clever, patriotic little apes of Japanese hurling themselves about."

Dec. 14 Sunday. Found at the Savage Club a large parcel marked "With Gemel's love and homage—Christmas '41."

It contained two MSS.—that of *Gemel in London* as originally brought from Scotland, and as re-written in London. (See *Ego*, pp. 91-96.) Both are in Jock's handwriting—it was before he had learned to type. At the beginning and again at the end of the second MS. is this document :

GEMEL IN LONDON

The genesis of this novel was Agate's. He imparted the plan to me which was then the constant discussion between us for some months. By mutual agreement I wrote the first draft of 35,000 words upon which we worked together, expanding the book to its present length. Roughly it may be said that all the stuff in ink is mine (Alan Dent's) while the pencil-work—though often in my handwriting—is Agate's. But we accept equal and joint responsibility for every word in the book. This is in case *Gemel in London* becomes famous—which it won't.

Signed by that pair of children

February 1928

{ GEMEL
{ RUBICON

Dec. 16 Tuesday. Open my morning paper and read :

Hit disc of the year in America is a queer, low, yearning kind of love song called *Green Eyes*, as played by Jimmy Dorsey's band (Brunswick). Melody repeats nicely, but outstanding is

the singing of Bob Eberly and Helen O'Connell. That gal never hits a note straight. She slides to it. She's like a trombone with curves.

The post brought a present from that fountain of generosity, Barry Lupino—the two volumes of the Countess de Merlin's *Memoirs of Madame Malibran* published in 1840. I read that in the finale of *La Sonnambula* "by an ingenious transposition of the original phrase of Bellini, her voice descended to the tenor G ; then by a rapid transition she struck the G above the treble stave, an interval of two octaves." And I'll bet that gal hit both notes straight !

Dec. 17 Over one thousand people attended the luncheon *Wednesday*. given by Foyle's to celebrate C. B. Cochran's fifty years of showmanship. F. W. Ogilvie, Director-General of the B.B.C., presided. I sat next to Evelyn Cochran, and here is my speech :

Mr Chairman, my Lords, Ladies, and Gentlemen :

There are three reasons why the task of proposing the toast of the afternoon should have fallen to me. I am one of Charlie Cochran's oldest friends ; I am one of the oldest dramatic critics in practice ; I asked for the job. I asked for it because I was determined that whoever proposed this toast should have the maximum of affection for C. B. as a man and the maximum admiration of him as an artist.

Now let us get the proportions right. Dr Johnson said : " I am not yet so lost in lexicography, as to forget that words are the daughters of earth, and that things are the sons of heaven." I hope that I shall never be so lost in dramatic criticism as to forget that the notices of dramatic critics are the theatre's daughters, and that the things they criticise are the drama's sons. In what follows you are to forget the critic and remember only our great impresario.

All the world loves a lover, and all the theatrical world loves an adventurer. In *Secrets of a Showman* Charles, referring to a time when he was momentarily possessed of £80,000, writes : " We had an accident to the proscenium arch, and it looked as if the whole building might come down." Ever since I have known C. B. it has looked as though at any moment the whole of him might come down. We find him writing : " To have done the Cuadro Flamenco in London was worth the £5007

which I lost on the ten weeks' season." I like the artistry of that odd £7. And I like, too, the gaiety with which he confesses to a loss of £20,000 on the revue *Mayfair and Montmartre*. History, writing of C. B., might do worse than use the words of Robert Louis Stevenson: "He went to ruin with a kind of kingly *abandon*, like one who condescended; but once ruined, with the lights all out, he fought as for a kingdom."

But why talk we of failure? C. B. has failed only in the one thing which doesn't matter—money. In the less material world he has always been Colonel Up and not Mr Down. His artistic integrity has been whole and unimpeachable. There is a kind of ass who can never see a dramatic critic without rushing up to him and asking what is the best theatre to go to? In C. B.'s heyday there was no need to rack one's brains; one simply gave the name of the theatre where Cochran had a show. In my first notice of him I find that I wrote: "Mr Cochran has brought over to England, after many years, the greatest living player of the day and one of the most exquisite artists of any age—Eleonora Duse. He gave us a season of Pauline Lord in an American play of which the first three acts will stand comparison with anything written since Ibsen, and a season of the Guitrys, sublime *farceurs* whose message is that great art need not always pull a long face." Cochran's genius has consisted in giving the London theatre whatever of great and respectable art of all kinds has had the most of dazzle and of chic. We do not know what the future may hold for him. The age is getting vulgar and Charles has no *flair* for vulgarity. Taste may recede from him. His genius—I have to use the word again since there is no other—reminds me of Kipling's Banjo:

In the twilight, on a bucket upside down,
Hear me babble what the weakest won't confess—
I am Memory and Torment—I am Town!
I am all that ever went with evening dress!

But Kipling's twilight is not London's blackout. It may be that C. B.'s shows demand a London brilliantly lit up, Rolls-Royces with million candle-power headlights, and "all that ever went with evening dress." And the war is not helpful. Some of us have never forgotten that exquisite revue entitled *London, Paris, and New York*. I do not think that even C. B. would have a success to-day with a revue entitled *Berlin, Rome, and Tokio*. But the future doesn't matter. Golfers will understand when I say that what happens in the bye is of no importance to the man who has won the match. Charles

has won. He has achieved enduring fame in his lifetime. Let us praise him while he is still alive. That great orator, Nikita Balieff, said of the English that they honour a man only when he is dead. "If Wellington had not died, would they have buried him in St Paul's Cathedral?" There is no question to-day of burying Cochran in St Paul's, Westminster Abbey, or anywhere except our hearts.

One more matter. Cochran likes to be told that he is first and foremost a showman. Most showmen have had partners; and Charles has had a better partner than ever Barnum knew. You have seen Evelyn Cochran sitting next to her husband in his box on first nights, snuggling up to him in an attempt to keep his attention on the stage, and so turn to more gentle purpose that lion-tamer's eye with which C. B. was wont to rake the critics in the stalls. But however close to Cochran in his triumphs, Evelyn has been closer to him in defeat. She has sustained him with every wifely and feminine quality, to which she has added something unusual in women—the quality of humour. Sitting next to her to-day I became conscious that I was either not replying to her gracious conversation or replying inadequately. I apologised, saying that she must forgive me if, in view of my speech, I was distrait. She replied, "Dear Mr Agate, I am used to it. Since I married Charles all the men I have sat next to have been distrait." We shall never know how much it is owing to this noble and witty wife that her husband became, in his own day, an Immortal.

Dec. 18 No country in the world has so rich a storehouse of
Thursday. dramatic treasure as this one. No people in the world is so chary of entering that storehouse as the English are. I am reminded of this every time I see Edith Evans, when I spend the evening raging because that brilliant diction and eloquent smile which so became Millamant, Mrs Sullen, and Lady Fidget are thrown away on modern comparative trash. I suppose it was good fun watching Edith to-night in *Old Acquaintance*, that play about American women which Clare Boothe writes so much better than John van Druten. But I am afraid my mind was no more on it than was necessary to concoct my notice for Sunday. When I got home I rummaged about until I found Angus McBean's exquisite photograph of Edith as Mrs Sullen, and with this in front of me, did my best.

Dec. 19 Friday. To judge by the nonsense written about my excessive use of French you would think it amounted to 10 per cent. or more. Now look at these figures taken from *The Amazing Theatre*. This contains just over 100,000 words. Ten per cent. of 100,000 is 10,000. Actually the book contains 499, say 500 French words, or .05 per cent. My article on Sunday will have the following :

In Balzac's novel, *La Femme de Trente Ans*, occurs this passage :

"La jeune fille n'a qu'une coquetterie, et croit avoir tout dit quand elle a quitté son vêtement ; mais la femme en a d'innombrables et se cache sous mille voiles ; enfin elle caresse toutes les vanités, et la novice n'en flatte qu'une.

"(*Glossary.* Coquetterie=coquetry ; Vêtement=vestment ; Innombrables = innumerable ; Voiles = veils ; Vanité =vanity ; Novice=novice.)"

Dec. 20 Saturday. "Messieurs," said Victor Hugo's Lucrèce Borgia to some forty guests, "vous êtes tous empoisonnés." Which I suppose might be roughly translated "Misters, you are all poisoned." Sarah Bernhardt used to half-coo, half-breathe this through incarnadined lips and coralled nostrils, after which she would disappear through a secret panel in the manner of the Cheshire Cat, leaving a dimpled smile behind her. And the folding doors at the back would be thrown open to disclose forty waiting coffins. In *Warn That Man*, at the Garrick to-night, a mere three are poisoned of whom two pretend to be, since they have poured the fatal port into the epergne. Alas, no coffins are provided. We no longer have stomach for horrors, Hugo-esque or Websterian, "the waxen images which counterfeit death, the wild masque of madmen, the tomb-maker, the bellman, the living person's dirge, the mortification by degrees." To-day we require bamboozlement of another kind. Elizabethan and Jacobean horror-mongers resorted to scenes of comedy very much in the way a torturer will throw water over his victim to bring him into trim for the next dose. To-day's comedy-thriller puts the accent on the comedy, which, so far as I am concerned, is like multiplying *o* by *o*—the result is nothing. Gordon Harker skilfully remembered

a lot of dreary bosh, and the audience was delighted. This play is bad enough to run a year.

Dec. 22 Stephen Miall, who knew Charles Dilke very well,
Monday. said that D. had told him these two things :

Bismarck said to Dilke, " If I were to live again I should be a republican ; government by king, it is government by women ; and if they are bad women it is bad, and if they are good women it is worse."

He also said to Dilke, " They have compared me to Cavour. It is true that I have helped to make the German Empire, but I had behind me the German Army which was very good and the German Civil Service which was even better. But Cavour, he has made Italy, and he had behind him nothing."

Dec. 23 Ended my wireless talk on Hazlitt with a quotation
Tuesday. from the early essay on the Causes of Methodism, in which I applied to H. what he himself wrote about King David :

The first Methodist on record was David. He was the first eminent person we read of, who made a regular compromise between religion and morality, between faith and good works. After any trifling peccadillo in point of conduct, as a murder, adultery, perjury, or the like, he ascended with his harp into some high tower of his palace ; and having chaunted, in a solemn strain of poetical inspiration, the praises of piety and virtue, made his peace with heaven and his own conscience. This extraordinary genius, in the midst of his personal errors, retained the same lofty abstract enthusiasm for the favourite objects of his contemplation ; the character of the poet and the prophet remained unimpaired by the vices of the man.

Pure in the last recesses of the mind.

To-day I receive a Christmas card from Esmé Percy, who was the Voice of Coleridge in Stephen Potter's illustrations to the talk, with the note : " I was greatly moved by your last words in the Hazlitt broadcast—you gave to the word ' mind ' a sense of the Infinite." A nice pat on the back from a professional actor to an amateur one. I tried for the effect, and then wondered if I had overdone it.

Christmas Eve. Jock sends me a Christmas present of the kind of which he alone is capable. This is a tiny book whose fly-leaf runs :

TITLE TESTS

BY

ALAN DENT

A QUIZ BOOK FOR PERSONS WITH CLAIMS TO CULTURE

(This edition, in the author's hand, is limited to two copies, of which this is Number Two. It belongs to James Agate.)

Christmas 1941

The book contains fifty quizzes, each of ten questions, which he has contributed to *John o' London's Weekly* during the past year. Every one of them shows that quality of mind for which the only word is elegance. Here is Quiz Number Two.

What is each of the following, and who made it ?

1. La Dame Blanche
2. The Black Tulip
3. The Moon in the Yellow River
4. Meine Lieb' ist grün
5. The Purple Jar
6. Symphonie en blanc majeur
7. Le Lys Rouge
8. The Lilac Sunbonnet
9. A Study in Scarlet
10. The Blue Mazurka

ANSWERS

1. Opera by Boieldieu. 2. Novel by Dumas. 3. Play by Denis Johnston. 4. Song by Brahms. 5. Tale by Maria Edgeworth. 6. Poem by Théophile Gautier. 7. Novel by Anatole France. 8. Novel by S. R. Crockett. 9. Novel by Conan Doyle. 10. Light opera by Lehar.

Christmas Day. Concoct my Quiz for the Forces. Spend all day over this, dine at the Café Royal, and then to a party in a top flat in Duke Street. Am motored by Norman Newman to Hackney Wick, where I spend the night. At 2 A.M., with the assistance of a bottle of whisky and a good memory, I proceed to revise my Quiz. After which I read for an hour in Antonin Reschel's *Vénus Dammées*, all about the gallant ladies of the eighteenth century. Bed at five, and dream that I write a

1941]

EGO 5

one-act comic opera in the early Mozartian manner called *Lesbien et Lesbienne*.

Dec. 30 The year's work, deplorably less than before:
Tuesday.

<i>Sunday Times</i>	36,000 words
<i>Daily Express</i>	42,000 "
<i>Tailer</i>	55,000 "
<i>John o' London's Weekly</i>	47,000 "
<i>Ego 5</i>	60,000 "
Odd articles	10,000 "

250,000 words

Earnings have shown a decrease of some £2000 as between this year and 1938.

Dec. 31 When I handed over my affairs to Stanley Rubin-
Wednesday. stein I assessed my liabilities at £2200. (*Ego 4*,
p. 180.) Here is a letter from S. R. showing how
wide of the actual mark I was :

5 & 6 Raymond Buildings
Gray's Inn
London, W.C.1
30th December 1941

DEAR JIMMIE,

When I took over your affairs at the outbreak of war you were in debt to 52 private creditors, 2 moneylenders, the Bank, your horse account, and the Revenue for arrears of income tax and surtax—roughly £5000.

The road has been rough and hard—but (mixing the metaphors) I perceive calmer waters ahead, and I have great pleasure (and pride) in telling you that I have paid off all your private creditors, both the moneylenders, the Bank, and surtax up to date. All you owe now is the balance of your horse account (they're eating your head off), and arrears of income tax. In other words I have reduced your indebtedness from £5000 to something just over £1500—and you've lived !

Yours,

STANLEY

P.S. A Happy, Peaceful and Prosperous New Year.

P.P.S. Would you like to take over the management of *my* affairs and try and be as clever !

1942

Jan. 1 Bang, crash, wallop ! Another letter from Stanley
Thursday. Rubinstein :

5 & 6 *Raymond Buildings*
Gray's Inn
London, W.C.1

31st December 1941

MY DEAR JIMMIE,

You are hereby requested to attend at this office on Tuesday next at 3.30 P.M. to discuss with me and with Mr Chapman your financial future.

In addition to the arrears of income tax (£1225), the current income tax and surtax will amount to approximately £150 a month ! Mr Chapman is waiting to hear from you whether you can keep this appointment.

Yours,

STANLEY RUBINSTEIN

Jan. 2 Thinking over the events of the past year I find I
Friday. forgot to record in the Diary the fact that I received from the War Office my two medals for the war of 1914-18 ! Meeting Ian Hay, now a major-general, in a theatre, I asked him to stir up the appropriate department. The medals arrived three days later, with a letter from the W.O. apologising and saying that they had not been able to trace my address.

New Year Resolutions

1. To refrain from saying witty, unkind things, unless they are really witty and irreparably damaging.
2. To tolerate fools more gladly, provided this does not encourage them to take up more of my time.
3. To be more patient with Leo. To bear with that all-pervading aroma of stale Vapex, those scented yet acrid plugs, twists, and flakes, that October-to-March sniffing and snuffing, the sneezing and coughing with which he draws attention to himself whenever I am telephoning, the eternal jeremiads, and the physical clumsiness which, one day last week, caused the

following incident. Too blind to see whether the fire was alight or not, he lifted a live coal in his fingers, found it was hot, and let it roll under the piano ten feet away where it burned a hole in my carpet the size of a five-shilling piece. And then the typing ! At this very moment Lady Macbeth looks up at me from my desk and intones :

“ O, never shall son that moral sea ! ”

To-day, January 2nd, 1942, I resolve henceforth to tolerate all this, and to set against it the feast of malice, the flow of wit, and the fine temper of the musician who, when he has driven me half frantic, will go to the piano and play Beethoven more Beethovenishly than any living virtuoso, sing in a cracked voice the *tuttis* to the concertos, and improvise his own cadenzas. Leo is, I am sure, genuinely fond of me in spite of my too often brutal treatment of him ; he has, with Alan Dent, the least common mind of anybody I know. When I am most angry with him I think of Verlaine, whom he resembles in his love of sensuous beauty. And I reflect that the author of *Mes Prisons* would not have been an ideal secretary ! To sum up, he is both permanent irritation and perpetual delight ; the years he puts on to my life with one hand he takes off with the other. Apropos, Leo's generous befriending of a scruffy young man who had been in trouble gave rise to the best sally I ever heard. I was walking with Ernest Fenton in the Bayswater Road when we saw our old friend approaching with his protégé. “ Look,” said Ernest, “ here come Wormwood and Scrubs ! ”

Jan. 3 I never see or read a play of Shakespeare without
Saturday. being struck by something I have not noticed before. The same with Boswell's *Johnson*, which I took up round about three this morning. Read for an hour, and was brought up short by the perfect sentence : “ Jones loved beer, and did not get very forward in the church.”

Jan. 6 To Donald Wolfit's production of *A Midsummer*
Tuesday. *Night's Dream*. This has an admirable Puck by a young boy called Bryan Johnson. The point about Puck is that he *must be played by a male actor*. There is a charm

and a grace about your actress which must prevent her from simulating Puck, about whom the first and last thing to be said is that he is a rude little boy. If you don't believe Shakespeare, try Drayton :

He meeteth Puck, which most men call
Hobgoblin, and on him doth fall.—
This Puck seems but a dreaming dolt,
Still walking like a ragged colt,
And oft out of a bush doth bolt,
Of purpose to deceive us ;
And leading us makes us to stray,
Long winter's nights out of the way,
And when we stick in mire and clay,
He doth with laughter leave us.

Anybody accustomed to seeing my little horse Ego emerge from Albert's hedge leaving bits of his winter coat on the wet brambles will realise that between the part and even an Ellen Terry (Princess's, 1856) there is, to put it mildly, a discrepancy. But few horsemen are students of the drama, while even fewer dramatic critics are horsemen.

Jan. 9 Childishly pleased at something George Harrap told
Friday. me to-day. This was that he had given one of my favourite walking-sticks, my present to him on his recent wedding, to Winston Churchill, and that if I looked at the photograph in the *Daily Telegraph* of the P.M. entering Parliament House, Ottawa, I should see that he is carrying it. I looked, and it is so.

Jan. 11 The Jews are often blamed for that ostentation
Sunday. which is merely the expression of their lavish hospitality. This is unfair. Some of the hospitality is shrewd, but a great deal of it is pure generosity. Edgar Cohen, the father of Madeleine, who for thirty years kept open house in St John's Wood, when remonstrated with for not knowing half his guests, would say, "I shall worry if I know them! If they come to see me, good. If they come for a meal, also good. Much I shall care what they come for."

Louis Sterling, who every Sunday evening before the last war used to entertain from thirty to fifty uninvited guests, said much the same thing to me to-day. "If they come to see me, they are my friends ; if they come for the food, perhaps they need it."

Jan. 12 From a dramatic poem submitted to me in manuscript :
Monday.

HOSTESS : I knew of beauty in the works of Keats and Tennyson,
Music of petals falling, Enoch Arden and Endymion.

DOCTOR : Modern poets are rare,
Picking off vermin in children's hair.

Shall recommend this to one of those precious little magazines which publish this sort of thing.

Jan. 18 Got up at 8.30, went through my mail, and arrived
Tuesday. at the Carlton Theatre in time for a film of John Barrymore in a burlesque of himself indistinguishable from his Hamlet on an off-night. Lunched at the Ivy with Osbert Sitwell, full of ghost stories which have happened to him. A particularly good one about seeing a boy who had been drowned, his face all covered with weeds. This happened at Renishaw, the Yorkshire home of the Sitwells. Later, on visiting his father in Italy, he learned for the first time of a family legend to the effect that a figure such as he had seen is supposed to haunt the house. Then to Donald Wolfit's *Richard III*, which I thought magnificent. Wrote 1050 words for the *Tatler*, and while these were typing sketched out a draft for the theatre article. Discovered a temperature, and spent the evening simultaneously reading Damon Runyon and listening to *Aida* on the wireless—a perfect combination.

Jan. 14 Slight 'flu. Dictated a scrappy article for the *D.E.*
Wednesday. and spent the rest of the day writing a notice of *Richard III* by hand. After years of dictation I find that the best work still has to be hand-made.

Jan. 15 Re-polished Wolfit article. 'Flu better. Swathed
Thursday. myself in thermogene, and went to lunch at Gwen Chenhalls' to meet my old sparring-partner, Princess Marie Louise. She was at her liveliest and best ; her mental energy is extraordinary. With her was Mrs Edward Hudson, who throughout the twenty years I have known her has possessed more distinction than a commoner is entitled to. H.H. told me that on the first Sunday of her convalescence some

years ago the visitors' book at Schomberg House contained four names—the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Brixton animal actor who plays Puss-in-Boots in the Christmas Pantomime, the Pearly King, and James Agate. Saw my *Richard* article in type, and at once set about re-writing it. Dined at Swiss Cottage with Michal Hambourg and her husband, also Lance Sieveking and his boy, who is going into the Air Force if the war lasts and to a university if it doesn't. Called on Wilfred Rouse, who is laid up with gastric 'flu, and was rewarded by his mother with a present of two pairs of kippers.

Jan. 16 Spend the morning quarrelling with Leo, who holds
Friday. that he is the personification of sound reasoning and clear-sighted judgment, as against my view that he is a jumble of wilful wrong-headedness and natural mental astigmatism. As I am in a mean mood I do *not* say that his wit redeems this. The trouble arises from his insisting that Richard is the one sympathetic character in Shakespeare's play, and that the possession of so much charm, humour, and high spirits completely atones for his unfortunate habit of murdering a lot of uninteresting relatives. "In any case, I admire criminals; good people bore me." We decide to lunch separately. Come back at five to find him in the best of tempers and full of the trial of Leopold and Loeb, which he has been reading. "They would have been an admirable model for Eton or Harrow." This time I don't take him seriously. Our squabbles are not real quarrels; they are the expression of that mild dislike which, says Leo, always exists between old friends.

A young gentleman has sent me his version of Racine's *Iphigénie en Aulide*, which he has turned into modern prose comedy. Most amusing. Take, for example, Achilles' tirade in the first act which begins:

Non, non, tous ces détours sont trop ingénieux :

and ends :

Ce même amour, soigneux de votre renommée,
 Veut qu'ici mon exemple encourage l'armée,
 Et me défend surtout de vous abandonner
 Aux timides conseils qu'on ose vous donner.

The gist of thirty-four tedious Alexandrines is faithfully, succinctly, and wittily reproduced in the single line: "Well,

I'm damned ! What's the matter with everybody ? " But isn't Clytemnestra a bit ' previous ' when she calls Agamemnon a " *sadistic monster* " ?

Jan. 19 Monday. To Harwich in perishing weather to talk to mine-layers, minesweepers, and so forth. Dined with the Admiral and then to the ingeniously devised, well lit and warmed theatre, which had been a wine store, or something of the sort. Told a few stories, and then did a Brains Trust the other way round, with me asking the questions and the Navy answering. It was a team affair, Ratings v. Wrens v. C.P.O.'s and P.O.'s. Three of each. Each member of the winning team to receive twelve books out of the Everyman Library which Dent's had given me to take down. The difficulty was the level of the questions. Recent discovery that out of twelve well-known Savages only a revered chemist of great age knew the last words of Marmion—"Charge, Chester, charge ! On, Stanley, on !"—was a warning. The fact that last week I received two letters from soldiers beginning, "Do you no [*sic*] of a good book . . ." was another. If I made the thing too easy there would be no fun ; if too difficult, the competition must be a flop. Each member of each group was interrogated in turn—first A.B., first Wren, first P.O., then second A.B., and so on. We had a blackboard, a scorer, and a timekeeper. The A.B.'s won with a maximum score of 12. The P.O.'s were second with a score of 10. They failed to spell "manœuvres" and did not know that it was the Crippen case in which wireless was first used as an aid to detection. The Wrens scored 7, getting one of Vesta Tilley's best-known songs wrong, and failing to spot references to Burns, Queen Elizabeth, Professor Joad, and Catherine Parr. The evening wound up with something which was at once a rebuke and a lesson to the fashioners of Quiz. There had also been a concert, which included a band famous for its presentation of swing, and I had noticed one of the players who spent the evening slapping a double bass with the palm of his hand—surely the most degrading occupation known to man. In the hotel smoking-room after the concert I said to this vacant fellow, "What is your favourite book ?" He replied, "The *Moral Discourses of Epictetus* !"

Jan. 21 Ted Elliott awarded the B.E.M. (See entry for
Wednesday. July 8, 1941.)

Jan. 22 Telegram :
Thursday.

THANK YOU INDEED FOR YOUR MAGNIFICENT AND GENEROUS
REVIEW OF MY WORK STOP MAY I CONTINUE TO DESERVE IT
OF YOU AND THE PUBLIC STOP GARRICK IS MY YARD-STICK
HE HAD VERSATILITY AND A ROUND FACE TOO STOP WARMEST
REGARDS—DONALD WOLFIT.

Here is a player who, in the last four years, two of these being war years, has played the Fox in Ben Jonson's *Volpone*, Giovanni in Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, and appeared under his own management as Othello, Bottom, Shylock, Richard III, and Hamlet. Probably the list could be extended, but it's enough. It is owing to Wolfit that for four weeks in succession, *en pleine guerre*, there have been four revivals of plays by Shakespeare played to full or nearly full houses. But this is no reason why the London playgoer should lay flattering unction to his soul in the matter of improved taste. D. W.'s manager telephoned me this morning to say that at each and every performance Czechs, Poles, Norwegians, Belgians, and French had accounted for 50 per cent. of the audience and sometimes 75 per cent. "The rest have been Jews; had we relied on the Christians we should have played to empty benches." All the same I don't like Wolfit's Hamlet. Indeed, I disapproved so greatly of what I saw yesterday that I sat down round about midnight and again wrote my notice by hand, which I do only when I am excited. Finished at 2 A.M. and shall print the thing as it stands. Highly pleased with the conceit that D. W.'s round face "bespeaks as much melancholy as a small boy at the pantomime *extasié*d by Monsewer Eddie Gray." There are lots of fine things in Wolfit's performance, and I have given him credit for them. But it isn't Hamlet.

Lunched with George Harrap, who very pleasantly declined my proposed book of Shakespearean criticism based on actual stage performances. It appears that this would be a luxury book and that he has not got the paper for it. We were joined by a man who told us that when he was fire-watching on the night of

the Great Blitz his works foreman, who is a middle-aged Cockney, threw himself down on the top of him, when the rest of the scene proceeded something like this, the foreman singing softly to himself :

Jesus bids us shine with a pure clear light [bang !]
Like a little candle burning in the night [bang !]

"The bloody fires," said the man, "were blazing all round us."

Jan. 28 The reviews of *Thursdays and Fridays* have been *Friday.* excellent.

Times Lit. Supp. "These articles, the best of those he wrote for the *Daily Express* each Thursday and for *John o' London's Weekly* each Friday, have quality. None is too short to say something worth saying ; all have, under the pretence of being leisurely, a speed of thought likely to make anyone who hungers after gossip about literature and plays read the book at a sitting, unmindful of the 6 o'clock and 9 o'clock News."

Manchester Guardian. "Is there, after all, any much more urgent matter for our free democracies than this catching the ears of the groundlings, this coaxing, shocking, belabouring of them till they see why a good book is good ?"

Time and Tide. "The book is enormous fun most of the time. . . . This glittering collection."

I can bear it, therefore, when G. W. Stonier writes me to explain why the *New Statesman* has not noticed the book. "It was taken by a well-known reviewer who reported that he considered it not worth reviewing." (See entry for Nov. 11.)

Jan. 26 From Osbert Sitwell :
Monday.

Renishaw Hall
Renishaw
Nr. Sheffield
25. 1. 42.

MY DEAR AGATE,

A bad cold has prevented me writing to you, to tell you how much I enjoyed luncheon with you, and to tell you again that instance of Arnold Bennett's generosity.

In Giles Playfair's book, for example, there is a certain

amount about Sir Nigel and his relations with Arnold. The papers reviewing this book said that it was an interesting comparison between Arnold, the typical business man, with his mean and narrow outlook, and the generous and artistic Sir Nigel. As against this point of view, I told you the following story. That in 1922 or '23, Arnold wrote to an intimate friend of mine, a well-known poet whose passion for anonymity I again respect, a letter which ran somewhat in this fashion : "Dear Blank, I find I am richer this year than last ; so I enclose a cheque for £500 for you to distribute among young writers and artists and musicians who may need the money. You will know, better than I do, who they are. But I must make one condition, that you do not reveal that the money has come from me, or tell anyone about it."

I hope you are well, and not, like me, bronchitic.

Yours,
O. S.

From an unknown correspondent who has dug the following out of the *European Magazine* for 1787, and suggests that it is the perfect Damon Runyon story :

EVERET v. WILLIAMS

Suit instituted by Everet for an account of partnership profits

The bill stated that the Plaintiff was skilled in dealing in several commodities such as plate rings watches &c., that the Defendant applied to him to become a partner : that they entered into partnership, and it was agreed that they should equally provide all sorts of necessaries such as horses saddles bridles, and equally bear all expenses on the roads and at inns taverns alehouses markets and fairs : that the Plaintiff and the Defendant proceeded jointly in the said business with good success on Hounslow Heath, where they dealt with a gentleman for a gold watch ; and afterwards the Defendant told the Plaintiff that Finchley in the County of Middlesex was a good and convenient place to deal in, and commodities were very plenty at Finchley, and it would be almost all clear profit to them ; that they went accordingly, and dealt with several gentlemen for divers watches rings swords canes hats cloaks horses bridles saddles and other things ; that about a month afterwards the Defendant informed the Plaintiff that there was a gentleman at Blackheath who had a good horse saddle bridle watch sword cane and other things to dispose

of, which he believed might be had for little or no money; that they accordingly went, and met with the said gentleman, and after some small discourse they dealt for the said horse &c.: that the Plaintiff and the Defendant continued their joint dealings together until Michaelmas and dealt together at several places, viz: Bagshot, Salisbury, Hampstead, and elsewhere to the amount of £2000 and upwards.

The rest of the bill was in the ordinary form for a partnership account.

The bill was dismissed with costs to be paid by the Counsel who signed it. The Solicitors acting for the Plaintiff were fined £50 each. The Plaintiff and Defendant were hanged.

Jan. 27 Disappointed with Edward G. Robinson in *The Sea Tuesday*. *Wolf*, a psychological film about a rascally captain with a split mind, whereas I had been looking forward to two hundred lashes in Technicolor.

Jan. 28 Why should the best education corrupt good *Wednesday*. manners? Last winter I lent my leather-lined, fur-collared—at least fifteen inches of Canadian otter—motoring coat and relic of my pre-war, open-tourer, Bentley days—to the Playhouse Theatre, Oxford, and Balliol College, for the purpose of roof-spotting. As nobody seems to know in whose possession it now is I can't get it back. It isn't the value of the thing—which I couldn't replace anyhow—but the comfort that I want; the thermometer registered fourteen degrees below zero in London a few nights ago.

Jan. 30 'Flu, or something like it, coming on again, have *Friday*. stayed indoors Wednesday, yesterday, and to-day. On Wednesday night, feeling depressed, I sat down in my armchair and composed a Four Arts Quiz entirely for Jock.

FOUR ARTS QUIZ

1. Who wrote the opera *Emilia di Liverpool*?
2. What French actress wrote that she had decided to re-enter France *enceinte*?
3. Who said of what religious canvas: "Your ass is the saviour of your picture"?
4. With what deleterious substance did Opie mix his paints?

5. "Don't kid yourself!" What is the Shakespearean equivalent of this?
6. Of what American actress's Marguerite Gautier was the following written, and by whom? "It is the immaturity of a pressed flower—sweet, cherishable, withered. It has a gnomelike unrelation to the processes of life and death. It has the pathos of little bronze dancing boots, come upon suddenly in an old trunk. It is the ghost of something that has passed this way—the exquisite print of a fern in an immemorial rock."
7. Who said of what actor in what love-scene that he played it "as if he were a Houndsditch salesman cheating a factory girl over a pair of second-hand stockings"?
8. What great writer gave it as his opinion that "Shakespeare's comedies are altogether non-acceptable to America and Democracy"?
9. What dramatist was killed by a tortoise falling on his head?
10. Who said, "That will do—all that a pillow can do"?

ANSWERS

1. Donizetti. 2. Rachel to her sister Sarah, "Je suis décidée à rentrer grosse en France, dont le chagrin doit être exclu." 3. The poet Rogers to Benjamin Haydon on seeing his *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem*. 4. Tallow. 5. Hamlet to his mother: "Lay not that flattering unction to your soul." 6. Lillian Gish: Alexander Woolcott. 7. Shaw of Irving's wooing of Lady Anne in *Richard III*. 8. Walt Whitman. 9. Æschylus. 10. Dr Johnson on his death-bed.

This morning I receive a card from Jock giving his answers "jotted down within twenty seconds of receiving Quiz."

1. Gaetano Donizetti.
2. Rachel (I think).
3. Swinburne to Holman Hunt. A picture with Christ in it.
4. Brains (?).
5. "Lay not that flattering unction to your soul."
6. Lillian Gish (by Nathan ?).
7. Shaw on Somebody.
8. Emerson (?).
9. Aristophanes (?).
10. Doctor Johnson (for sure).

Jock

Jan. 31 Still indoors. Had a look at Galsworthy's *Ten Saturday. Famous Plays*, just published by Duckworth. They seem to be both better and worse than I remembered. Here is a frightful bit out of *Windows*. Bly, the

window-cleaner whose daughter was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for smothering her baby, is talking to the popular author, Mr March, who has just told him that "Beauty is the only thing worth living for!"

Bly: Well, I like to see green grass and a blue sky; but it's a mistake in a 'uman bein'. Look at any young chap that's good-lookin'—'e's doomed to the screen, or hair-dressin'. Same with the girls. My girl went into an 'air-dresser's at seventeen, and in six months she was in trouble. When I saw 'er with a rope round her neck, as you might say, I said to meself: "Bly," I said, "you're responsible for this—If she 'adn't been good-lookin' it'd never 'ave 'appened."

"Doomed to the screen" is utterly false; the entire working class would give its nose to get within smelling distance of a film-studio. There is more talk, March says, "What sort of a girl is she?" and *Bly* replies, "One for colour—likes a bit o' music—likes a dance, and a flower." The flower is a dreadful touch. I should like to have told Galsworthy of a conversation I once had with a real window-cleaner upset because a club on his books had been raided for excess of broadmindedness. "Wot they did was all right. The trouble was you could get in wivaht bein' a member."

Feb. 1 Sunday. Weather looks a little milder this morning, but still mustn't go out. Let me put it on record that January had the filthiest stuff, consistently, day in and day out, that I remember.

Feb. 2 Monday. Letter to a young critic:

MY DEAR SOLON

You may, of course, be right in saying that Charlie Kunz is a greater master of the piano than Anton Rubinstein. I understand that Mark Hambourg, who should be a judge of piano-playing and has heard both performers, holds the contrary opinion. You may be right in holding that Vera Lynn is a more brilliant *diseuse* than Judic, whom I never heard. But a great friend of mine, who is himself a considerable artist, heard Judic in Berlin in the 'nineties. He has also heard Lynn, and does not hold your view. You may be right in maintaining that Vivien Leigh can "make rings" round Ellen Terry;

that Vic Oliver is "a ten times better comedian than Arthur Roberts ever knew how to be"; and that Little Tich "couldn't live" with Arthur Askey. These things are not susceptible of proof. I, who saw the older artists and remember them perfectly, and have also seen and admired, in their degree and on their plane, the artists of to-day, do not agree with you. I am sixty-four. You, I understand, are nineteen. Some day you, too, will be sixty-four. What will you think if, on that far-off birthday, you are told about some chit making her first appearance that her Millamant swamps anything Edith Evans may be believed to have done with the part? But perhaps you did not see Evans's performance? You were four years old when our great comédienne played Congreve's morning bride.

Yours sincerely,
JAMES AGATE

Feb. 8 How many people know the words inscribed on the
Tuesday. statue of Johnson turning his back on the ruins of
 St Clement Danes? They are:

~ Samuel Johnson
LL.D.

Critic—Essayist—Philologist
Biographer—Wit—Poet—Moralist
Dramatist—Political Writer—Talker

Born 1709 Died 1784

Time has turned Johnson's stream of mind into an everlasting river. But it was the talking that did it. I was so much struck this morning by the aspect of the statue against the bare ruin'd choirs and the snow that I 'phoned the *Express* to come and take a photograph, which they did.

Feb. 4 Still indoors. Worth while being laid up to have
Wednesday. the chance of really reading Haydon's *Autobiography*, hitherto only glanced at. I can't make up my mind how far H. was an artist at heart. There is Hazlitt's:

I did not think he had failed so much from want of capacity, as from attempting to bully the public into a premature or overstrained admiration of him, instead of gaining ground upon them by improving on himself; and he now felt the ill

effects of the reaction of this injudicious proceeding. He had no real love of his art, and therefore did not apply or give his whole mind sedulously to it; and was more bent on bespeaking notoriety beforehand by puffs and announcements of his works, than on giving them that degree of perfection which would ensure lasting reputation.

As against this we must set Haydon's prayers, the sum of which is less "Let me be a great painter," than "Let Art be great in my time, and let me be her chief minister."

Has the irony of Haydon's end been sufficiently noticed? I do not mean that he found it necessary both to cut his throat and blow out his brains. Consider that the final act was brought about by the failure of his two vast canvases—the *Banishment of Aristides* and *Nero playing his Lyre while Rome is burning*. To exhibit these he had hired a room in the Egyptian Hall. But alas, another room had been taken in the same hall by, of all people, General Tom Thumb! The public flocked to see the modern oddity and left the heroes of antiquity severely alone, and in this manner was giantism vanquished by a dwarf. I like to think that Haydon threw up the sponge in a moment of pique, that he was spared the anguish of realising that he was not, had never been, and could never be, a great painter. Of the second string to his bow—his genius as a diarist—he was unconscious. It is by his *Autobiography* that he lives. Woe to other Diarists who have no masterpiece in another art to fall back upon!

Feb. 5 Lunch with the Paternosters. George Harrap
Thursday. in the chair. The idea is an exhibition bout
 of verbal fisticuffs between me and Hannen
Swaffer. Quite good fun. Then rehearse at B.B.C. till 7, and
at 7.40 go on the air in the "Desert Island Discs" series. What
eight gramophone records would I take with me? Programme
carefully built up to Yvonne Printemps singing "Je t'aime"
from *Les Trois Valses*; all agreed and arranged two days ago,
records procured from H.M.V. by B.B.C., and so forth. At the
last minute am told that somebody somewhere won't release the
copyright, even for cash. Will I take Madame Lily Pons to my
island, and spend my sojourn there listening to the Waltz song
from *Roméo et Juliette*? No, I will not. Will I have somebody

else *Connais-tu-le-pays*-ing? No. Finally, with five minutes to go, I get desperate, and seeing the Maggie Teyte album lying about, give the Forces Duparc's *Phydilè*, the least suitable song in the world. Revise my script but no time to change running order, so that I have to follow this with "I Hear You Calling Me"!! Now McCormack may very well come after Printemps, but *not* Marshall after Duparc. But by this time I don't care, and chuck it all at 'em—Handel, Rachmaninoff, Duparc, Marshall, Johann Strauss, Walton, Eric Coates, and Tschaikowsky, and hear afterwards that the Duparc was the best liked of the lot!

Feb. 7 Dickens Fellowship Luncheon. Mr Wemmick did some conjuring tricks, Miss Skiffins sang "in a trifling lady-like amateur manner that compromised none of us," and just before I got up to speak, the Aged, complete with ear-plugs, batteries, and sounding-boards, established himself in the vacant angle of the T-table just under my nose.

Told them how Dickens was obsessed by Shakespeare, and that Macbeth was his King Charles's head. Steerforth, shaking off his depression, says, "Why, being gone, I am a man again. And now for dinner, if I have not, Macbeth-like, broken up the feast with most admired disorder, Daisy." The shade of the young Canterbury butcher whom David defeated after throwing away the late Miss Larkin's faded flower rises in his memory "like the apparition of an armed head in *Macbeth*." Miss Tox's "most domesticated and confidential garments hung like Macbeth's banners on the outward wall." At the wedding of Florence Dombey and Walter Gay "The Amens of the dusty clerk appear, like Macbeth's, to stick in his throat a little." And how Hall Caine suggested that *Edwin Drood* is Shakespeare's tragedy all over again with the substitution of Jasper for Macbeth, Drood for Duncan, Neville Landless for Malcolm, and Rosa Budd for the crown of Scotland.

Ended by reading them an extract from John Coleman's account of the Farewell Dinner to Macready organised by Dickens.

Bulwer was the Chairman, and made a speech which read famously in the papers next day, but sounded very badly that

night. . . . Thackeray, who had to propose "the health of the ladies," would, I thought, have broken down every moment, not from the cause assigned by some "damned good-natured friends" (of that I can speak with positive certainty), but from sheer nervousness. Charles Dickens (a capital after-dinner speaker) was at his best, and ranged from grave to gay with equal facility; indeed, his speech was as florid as his costume, which was striking enough in all conscience. He wore a blue dress coat, faced with silk and aflame with gorgeous brass buttons; a vest of black satin, with a white satin collar and a wonderfully embroidered shirt. When he got up to speak, his long curly hair, his luxuriant whiskers, his handsome face, his bright eyes, his general aspect of geniality and bonhomie presented a delightful picture. I made some ingenuous remark upon the subject to Thackeray, who blandly rejoined, "Yes, the beggar is beautiful as a butterfly, especially about the shirt front."

Feb. 8 Ivor Brown suggests that John Gielgud's choice of *Sunday*. Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies for his Lady Macbeth shows his desire "to get away from conventional casting and to seek a subtler form of spur and temptress than a more statuesque figure and larger vehemence would supply." Tut-tut! To me the choice of Ffrangcon-Davies, coupled with Leon Quartermaine for Banquo, suggests John's very natural desire to keep to the company which supported him in *The Importance of Being Earnest*. How amusing if he had stuck to it throughout! What fun to sit in wonder before Edith's Lady Macbeth, and hear her "Oh, never shall sun that morrow see" uttered in Lady Bracknell's darkest "Alliance-with-a-parcel" tones! "Me, sir! What has it to do with me?" knowing very well that Macbeth's going hence has everything to do with her. I long to see Dr Chasuble telling Macbeth in George Howe's silkiest falsetto that his chatter about infected minds and deaf pillows is a metaphor drawn from the sick-room. And what a collector's piece would be Margaret Rutherford as the Gentlewoman, though I may be thinking less here of the governess than of the housekeeper, less of the Manor house than of Manderley. T. S. Eliot once re-wrote a Greek tragedy in the Wishwood manner. Why doesn't some highbrow re-write *Macbeth* in the *Rebecca* manner, with the mistress of Dunsinane watched over by Duncan's natural daughter? In the mind's

eye I conjure up a fearful vision of lace curtains, gloatings, and eggings on. "Another step, dear—it's quite a nice roof—no, dear, it isn't slippery—just a little nearer the edge, duckie." Except, of course, that there would be precious little sleep-walking with la Rutherford as the night nurse in charge.

But to go back to *Macbeth*. Like Hamlet, who says he will speak daggers but use none, Lady Macbeth speaks them pointedly, and must impress the audience with the fact that she has the necessary mettle. Has anybody, reading *Macbeth*, ever conjured up a small slight figure? No. But if any living English actress can persuade us to accept a Lady Macbeth out of the heavy-weight class, then Gwen is that actress. I remember how in *Magda* she faced up to Pastor Heffterdingt, and heard him say, "When you stood before me in your primitive strength" without turning a hair. An Egyptian native in the course of an essay on Shakespeare's heroines wrote: "Lady Macbeth was brave and venturesome, but she had no tact." Gwen is brave and venturesome, and has any amount of histrionic tact.

Feb. 10 Sometimes I have fits, perhaps accesses would be a better word, of insane happiness, the kind I knew as a boy. They may occur at any time, and have nothing to do with health, because I may be feeling quite ill. I had one such access to-day, and it lasted a full five minutes, during which it was "as it hath been of yore." Wordsworth's poem the other way round. Is this a first taste of second childhood? Can it be that the end of life is as happy as the beginning?

Feb. 12 At the Club to-night six of us were debating who was the greatest figure in history. Napoleon was finally agreed upon, with Alexander and Shakespeare as second and third. In the matter of the greatest woman, Cleopatra, Queen Elizabeth, and Joan of Arc polled two votes each. Presently a venerable member who goes to bed early and bears in mind Bacon's advice to avoid "subtile and knottie disquisitions," rose and said: "Good-night, gentlemen. You may be right about the men, but you're wrong about the women. The greatest woman in history is Shaw's Saint Joan."

Feb. 13 Esmé Percy told me of an interview he had with
Friday. Shaw, whom he found in something less than his usual spirits. He had been visited by the editor of a Physical Culture magazine some years G. B. S.'s senior. "What men of our age need," said this old bird, "is exercise of the neck muscles." Shaw said, "D'you mean I ought to stand on my head?" The old boy said "Yes," and stood on his. Shaw funk'd it, which was the cause of his depression. I suppose he thought the attempt and not the deed confounded him. How that play crops up everywhere! Esmé told me he had seen Sarah as Lady M. swathed from head to foot in leopard skins. "She made a meal of her husband," he added. "Sarah produced, and there was no ghost of Banquo. When it should have appeared a sword fell from the wall with a loud clatter. It was terrifying." The witches kept silent throughout, the voices coming from actors using megaphones at the back of the circle and gallery.

Feb. 14 My old friend, Ernest Helme, having sent me the
Saturday. *Cornhill* for 1876, I open it and find a passage in an essay on Humour which fits Leo Pavia better than anything I, who know him, could write :

The humorist is the man who laughs through tears. In the fabric of his emotions the warp of melancholy is crossed by the woof of cheerfulness. He laughs in the midst of a prayer and is yet not consciously irreverent ; in the very innermost mental recesses, consecrated to his deepest emotions, there are quaint grotesques and images due to the freaks of the wildest fancy ; the temple in which he worships is partly an old curiosity shop ; he belongs to the sect which keeps monkeys in its sacred places. You cannot tell whether a cathedral will most affect him with an awe of the infinite or an exhibition of tumblers at a pantomime. He specially hates a downright statement, true as Euclid, or solid as Adam Smith ; and thinks that all scientific truth is as wearisome to the mind as a steel cuirass to the body. There is no way of twisting it to queer shapes. His logic is founded upon the axiom that of two contradictory propositions both must be true. He starts from the assumption that A is not A. The oddities of his own character give him the utmost delight. He cherishes his whims and the arbitrary twists of his moral nature, for fear that he should lapse into straightforward simplicity of sentiment.

Feb. 15 When I got home last night I found this letter waiting
Sunday. for me :

*Littlecote
 Silverdale
 W. Carnforth*

February 12th, 1942

DEAR MR AGATE,

The long-wished-for opportunity to write to you has at last arrived. I never felt I dare before, but now that I am in a position to blackmail you, I have more courage. I haven't the least intention of doing so, and even if I had I haven't the foggiest notion of how to go about it. Now you are to know that I possess a copy of your play *The After Years*, which I have treasured all this time. I am one of the four survivors (yourself included) of the original cast of seven, and the happy memories of this and other plays you helped us with are still very vivid. It was at the Girls' Friendly Society at Mosley Common, a small colliery village between Leigh and Worsley, where you first acted with us, and I remember an eighteenth-century costume that you wore, a most becoming and resplendent affair of white and pale green satin with lace ruffles. I can see you now with a lovely old lace handkerchief flicking off grains of snuff taken from an old-world box. I still have the photographs which we had taken in Manchester before we went to have lunch at Parker's as your guests. I wonder if you would care to see yours if you haven't one.

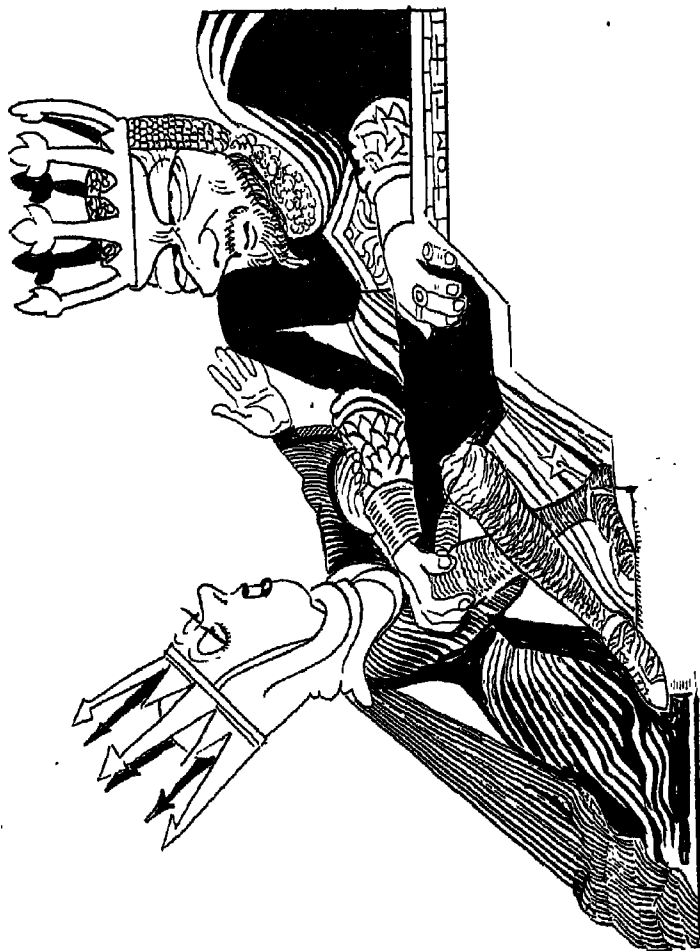
Must I give up my copy of *The After Years* (which I was supposed to have done at the end of rehearsals) or will the Author kindly let me have it back if I send it by registered post? I really must not continue, so wishing you the best of luck in these terrible times,

Yours very sincerely

CHRISTABEL EDMONDS

P.S. I still have the muslin my frock was made of.

Feb. 16 Lunched with Cochran at the Moulin d'Or. C. B.
Monday: mellow and philosophic even about British cigars.
 "Si on ne peut pas avoir ce qu'on aime, il faut aimer
 ce qu'on a." Evelyn agreed, and I noticed that she was wearing
 an extremely smart hat in the new Russian mode.



By courtesy of the "Folger and Bylander"

John Gielgud and Gwen Ffrangegh-Davies
in "Macbeth"
By Tom Ito



Photo Angus McBean

Edith Evans as Mrs Sullen

Feb. 18 No breakfast and no time for any lunch to speak of.
Wednesday. Went down with Wilfred Rouse to some icy hole on the Thames Estuary to hear Tom Lishman give a *diffident* performance of the Liszt E flat Concerto. Lishman hates showmanship and thinks the function of technique, of which he has plenty, is to make mountains look and sound like molehills. When I tell him that a *furtive* rendering of the Second Rhapsody is an anomaly, he merely smiles and goes to the piano and plays a Haydn Sonata exquisitely. His performance to-night reminded me of one of my mother's maids who used to say, "Excuse me passing behind you!" Drinks afterwards in the Sergeants' Mess, where something goes wrong and our taxi fails to arrive. Home, starving, about midnight, to find nothing in the larder, and so to Wilfred's, where he invents something he calls toasted cheese. Poor day.

Feb. 19 Lunch at the Savoy for the revival of *Tales of Thursday.* *Hoffmann.* Edward's translation. Make one of my best speeches—they tell me so, but I know it—though nothing that would reproduce here except, perhaps, that bit about how Gautier's

Tout passe.—L'art robuste
 Seul a l'éternité,
 Le buste
 Survit à la cité.

has an even deeper truth in these days of cities reduced to rubble, and famous monuments left miraculously intact.

In the evening to see Beatrix Lehmann in light comedy. *Non, qui n'a pas vu* B. L. in light comedy *n'a rien vu!* Like the Siddons, she has no holding in comedy. Mourning, and nothing less than mourning, becomes our modern Electra, whose melancholy is Stygian and settled. "Hell is murky," says Lady Macbeth. But never as murky as to-night's sunny drawing-room. The *New Yorker* recently had a drawing of a shopman saying of some black-out curtains, "Black, Madam? They are positively Cimmerian!" The word exactly suits the tone of Lehmann's voice, which comes on the ear through the blanket of the dark. "I have heard that geniuses are good fun at parties," somebody says. "They spill more," replies the Lehmann in the voice in which Lady Macbeth computes how much blood old

Duncan might have been expected to have in him. And why must she dress like Rossetti's pictures of Elizabeth Siddal? An unhappy miscalculation by a genuinely clever artist, and how I shall get out of it on Sunday I don't know. Probably I shall just tell the truth.

Feb. 25 Letter from Meric Dobson, still peeling potatoes in
Wednesday. H.M.S. *Foxhound*: "No, dear James, I haven't got your fur coat in my cook's galley."

From an evening paper:

The Army's best spotter of enemy planes was a soldier who twiddled the knobs of his A.A. gun predictor so dexterously that he was taken round from battery to battery to teach recruits. His superior officers were amazed at the speed and sensitiveness of his fingers, until one night he was asked what he did in civilian life. "I was a safe-breaker," he replied.

Charles Lamb, Anatole France, O. Henry—all would have loved this.

Feb. 28 Herbert Morgan in the chair at the Savage Club
Saturday. with a collection of guests which included H.M. the King of Greece and Sir Edwin Lutyens, O.M. I made a speech on the art of majesty and the majesty of art. After-dinner speaking doesn't worry me. It's so simple, and here are the rules. Always be prepared. (Tucked away in my case of asthma cigarettes are the notes for a speech *on anything*.) Don't waste time wondering why you've been called on. Plunge into the subject, make it snappy, let the stories be relevant, and at the first cough or sign of fidgeting, sit down.

March 2 Met Eddie Knoblock at the Café Royal. He said
Monday. about Duse, "She played *La Locandiera* like a faded rose that is resigned to being faded. No comedy in the English sense. Nothing brittle about her performance." This was very interesting to me as it confirmed what I have always thought about Duse. And also what Max Beerbohm wrote. After Eddie had gone found that I had no money in my pockets, had exhausted my cheque book, and that the Café had run out of cheque forms. I have always refused to sign bills at restaurants—my one economic grace—and was wondering what

to do when a young man at the next table asked if he might come to my assistance *as his mother was the grand-daughter of one of Rachel's sisters, and he felt he could do no less.*

March 4 X—— is an extraordinary fellow. During the *Wednesday*. close on forty years I have known him he has never done a stroke of work and has managed to live in style on no income. Fascinating mixture of Rawdon Crawley, Harold Skimpole, and Soapy Sponge. In some ways a great artist ; he told me he made a point of never knowing people with fewer than two motor-cars. When I asked why, he said " One for them, and one for me." When the war came he retired to some filthy hole in the Wash and lived on a few shillings a week. " Dansez maintenant ! " would be La Fontaine's end to the story. But it won't in this case. Soon after Christmas his lawyers wrote to him saying he had come into a fortune. That is what I call poetic justice.

March 6 My forty-year old-play, *The After Years*, turns out to *Friday*. be a dreadful Cavalier and Roundhead drama of the worst Fred Terry-Julia Neilson type. My photograph displeases me less. The post also brings a pastiche by Jock of the dramatic and musical critics of the *Sunday Times* :

JAGO MOONSTONE

Enfin Malherbe vint. By which one means that it is quite a time before Miss Frances Day can get the field to herself in *Black Vanities* at the Victoria Palace. For I count as nothing an earlier appearance in an inconsiderable sketch of Sadie Thompson where the stage is usurped by Messrs Flanagan and Allen as the tropical exiles torn between admiration of that noisy minx and a far profounder concern for what must be the state of Old Trafford in all that rain.

Towards closing-time Miss Day looks pleasingly surprised to find herself at last on a stage empty of everything but microphones, though these are as plentiful as brussels sprouts in a suburban garden in war-time. There she beams at us, a vision of resistless and smiling pulchritude in a resistless and smiling crinoline devised by Mr Cecil Beaton unpreoccupied with notions of domestic economy. There is a perfect description of this assured artist's impact, allure, and *empressement*

somewhere in Pierre Louÿs, but unfortunately I have lent my copy to the milkman. Whippersnappers will say they have the passage by heart, and that I don't need to quote. They have not. Greybeards don't know it either, and I have half-forgotten it myself. I last aired it when I saw Sarah in *je ne sais quel drame* by, I think, Catulle Mendès. But as no man alive now knows what I am talking about, I shall, as they say, turn it in.

SOLOMON OLDMAN

Dr Malcolm Sargent is said to have included Delius's *Song before Sunrise* in his popular orchestral concerts at the Coliseum, and in the course of the week Mme Gerhardt gave a Schubert-Brahms-Wolf song-recital at the National Gallery. But these things are hardly worth my attendance nowadays. If I want to renew acquaintance with Delius's score I take it down from my bookshelf and read it before breakfast, and if I feel inclined to recall the intensity which Gerhardt used to put into *Die Krähe* in the *Winterreise* I have only to glance at Schubert's song for Gerhardt's former power, faultless intonation, and abiding subtlety to repeat their effect in my mind, that inward ear which is the bliss of solitude.

When the critical apparatus is as uniquely developed as it is in a case like mine, the whole interest in music becomes noumenal, as Kant would say, rather than phenomenal. We no longer need voices or instruments or gut-scrappers or key-wallopers to come between us and the composer's seminal urge and flow. The other day when I was reading aloud a Mass of Orlandus Lassus to a gifted colleague, he interrupted me halfway through the Kyrie to tell me how much we were enjoying ourselves. I was reading, by the way, from the original manuscript, and this adds an important nuance to the pleasure derivable from such accomplishment.

Take a more elementary example. The manuscript of Bach's *Das Wohltemperierte Clavier*, crabbed and cryptic though it may seem to the layman in places, is far more satisfying to the highly developed music-lover in bed or over his whisky-and-soda than a mere modern printed copy crudely played on somebody's harpsichord. There is a relevant passage on the evocative significance of an artist's own literal or musical calligraphy in Kaethe Tittel's *Untersuchungen über die Schreibgeschwindigkeit* (Munich, 1926). But it is perhaps too long to give in full, and anyhow my space is done. I hope to make a fascinating theory at which I am now about to arrive far plainer to the man in the street in the

course of my next three articles. This one, a first approach, does not aim at doing more than touch the fringe of a subject so esoterically topical.

March 10 Tuesday. How much superior is French sense to Anglo-Saxon sensibility ! Rooting about the Charing Cross Road the other day, I found two volumes of the *Mercure de France* (Paris, 1926) containing an historical aperçu entitled *L'Etrange Passion de Junot, Duc d'Abrantès*. From this I cull :

J'ai lu beaucoup de romans dans ma vie, surtout depuis que je me suis retiré dans mon pays natal, après avoir servi l'Empereur du mieux que j'ai pu ; et dans tous ces romans, comme dans toutes les poésies, je n'ai jamais vu célébrer qu'une passion : l'amour d'un homme pour une femme, ou d'une femme pour un homme. Certainement, c'est bien intéressant, cet attrait auquel nous devons tous l'existence ; moi aussi, dans ma jeunesse, j'ai été porté vers ce sexe, non moins séduisant que perfide ; et Junot, également, a dû parfois se soumettre à son empire. Mais à présent que j'ai eu bien le temps de réfléchir à tout ceci, dans ma vieille caboche, il me semble que la Nature n'a pas établi les choses d'une manière si nette, si tranchée qu'on a bien voulu nous l'enseigner ; et que certains êtres, doués d'une sensibilité particulière, confondent en eux l'amour et l'amitié, de telle façon qu'ils arrivent aux transports de la plus délirante passion, sans que l'objet de cette passion soit nécessairement d'un sexe opposé, ainsi que nous le voyons toujours dans les romans, les tragédies et les opéras. Seuls les Anciens (du moins, à ce que j'ai pu lire dans les traductions, car j'ignore le latin comme le grec), seuls les Anciens ont célébré de manière fort touchante la flamme de l'amitié, consumant le cœur de deux nobles et beaux jeunes hommes. Ils auraient certainement honoré à ce titre les mânes de Junot, duc d'Abrantès, qui aima Napoléon comme aucune femme ne l'a jamais aimé, bien loin de là, et qui mourut de son amour. . . .

I would send these volumes to Straitlace except that he would probably reply with the gangster in the film, " But look, buddy, there's such a thing like ethics."

March 12 Thursday. At the Café Royal to-night a young gentleman at the next table said in a loud voice, " I can see no wit in Molière, Pope, Fielding, Sheridan, or Jane Austen. I belong to the twentieth century, which means that I

have outgrown the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth." I leaned across and asked, "Didn't somebody in *Candide* find Homer boring, Virgil frigid, Horace disgusting, and Milton barbaric?" The young man said, "The gentleman was quite right!"

March 14 From Miss Mitford: "When one man is talking to another who does not understand him, and when he that is talking does not understand himself, that is metaphysics!"

March 15 To Bulford on Salisbury Plain. Brains Trust with *Sunday*. Gen. White, V.C., M.C., Stephen Spender, Peter Eckersley, Prof. Andrade, Mark Hambourg, and as question master the Rev. Sir Herbert Dunnico, ex-deputy Speaker of the House of Commons. Do male kangaroos have pouches? Why do butchers wear straw hats in winter? Why does a dog's nose remain wet? Some of the questions invited flippancy. Asked why flowers have different colours, I told how I went into a music-shop and heard a young lady ask, "Have you got *Nasturtiums*, *Why Are You Blue?*" The salesman replied, "We haven't, and they aren't!" Lots of fun and whisky at the County Hotel afterwards. Mark told us how at one time he used to play as an encore Rubinstein's Staccato Study in C. Tiring of this he substituted Schumann's Toccata, also in C, which a well-known critic mistook for the Rubinstein. And continued to mistake to the day of his death. "Why didn't you tell him?" I asked. Mark replied in that idiom which always fascinates me: "At *my* expense he should be enlightened!" Eckersley told us how after the concert hall at Broadcasting House was built, there was doubt whether the door would admit a concert grand. "Try it," said somebody. But the musical director objected on the ground that if his beautiful Bechstein got stuck it would be damaged. So they instructed the carpenter to take measurements and make an exact replica in ply-wood. This was done, and they then found that they couldn't get the model out of the carpenter's shop.

When it was my turn to talk I told them about my first Soldiers' Concert. We had been gnawing our fingers in a desert of boredom and Wiltshire mud, and there was much excitement

as we gathered in the Y.M.C.A. hut. I can even recall the programme. First, a tenor sang *When you come Home at Eventide*. (Why have our present-day song-writers lost the knack ?) Then an arch young lady sang an arch ditty about abandoning seaside flirtation and sticking to somebody for keeps. This was called *Good-bye, Boys, I'm Through*. Next a corporal delivered himself of something entitled *They've shifted Mother's Grave to build a Cinema*. In the middle of this the colonel and his lady entered. The corporal stopped. "Please go on," said the lady, smiling. "Clicked ! " said the corporal, with the gesture soldiers still use. I remember how the audience roared. Then came Courtice Pounds. He began with *Mandalay*, and when he got to the line "An' there ain't no 'buses runnin' from the Bank to Mandalay," we realised that there were none running from the Plain to our homes. After this. . . . But I must stop maundering about things that happened a quarter of a century ago.

March 16 To Hertford for Warship Week. Good speechifying *Monday*. by Commander Locker-Lampson, Rear-Admiral Sir Murray Sueter, and Rear-Admiral Hj. Riiser-Larsen, of the Royal Norwegian Navy, and the first man to fly over the North Pole. Also me. Heard this definition of an atheist : "A man without invisible means of support."

March 17 An exchange of letters.
Tuesday.

From John Gielgud :

Queen's Hotel
Leeds

March 15th

MY DEAR JAMES,

I cannot resist entering into your argument à propos of the time problem in Shakespeare—for Granville-Barker once gave me a magnificent disquisition on the subject. I cannot quote his brilliantly lucid words with certainty, but this is the gist of them.

We were rehearsing the great scene in *Lear*, and, after the cursing of Goneril, "Hear, nature, hear," Lear leaves the stage, to return a few lines later with the words "What, fifty of my followers at a clap, within a fortnight ?" I asked (like Lady Bracknell, merely for information) "Who has told Lear

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about the sacking of his followers? Oswald, perhaps, off stage?" "That," said Barker, "is the kind of mistake you actors make, worrying about such realistic off-stage happenings. Shakespeare never wrote in this convention. The absence and reappearance, with time and action meticulously accounted for both by actors and audience, of characters in plays was not used by dramatists until the school of Ibsen. Shakespeare wishes to show the audience that Lear, though capable of the mighty curse, leaves Goneril's house already shaken and mentally weakened by the scene he has gone through, and so he brings him back on to the stage with a weaker tearful speech before his final exit." I'll warrant the old actors cut the return altogether, and waited for a big hand and an exit after the curse. Some one has, of course, told Lear and no matter who.

Similarly, we discussed whether Lear had decided to ask for the test of the daughters' loves before his first entrance in the play or as a sudden impulse of vanity when seated on his throne before the court. Again Barker said, "Decide for yourself. But whichever way you play it, *the audience will not have time to take in that detail*. They are interested in the story as it unfolds before their eyes—the actors have enough to do to set forth the fable in that first act, and put over the *story* and the *character* of each personage that is represented."

The same applies to *Macbeth*. Exactly *when* the two of them planned the murder, *how long* before the play opens they had talked about it ("What beast was't then that made you break this enterprise to me?")—these points will not be important except to the actors' peace of mind and the student's speculation. It is easy enough for the players to show by their manner and make-up (and Shakespeare was there to tell them just how much to show) that *some time* has gone by between the murder and their entrance as King and Queen. Similarly, time must pass to allow Macduff to get to England and return with Malcolm. Again, the Macbeths have time (in their dressing-rooms) to get older before the audience sees them again. These things are pure theatre, Shakespeare always wrote for swift performance, and what the audience saw before their eyes he knew they would accept. If we had not studied the plays for three hundred years in such detail these things would not trouble us.

Yours ever

JOHN GIELGUD

Have you read an essay by Stephen Spender, "Time in *Macbeth*"? Fascinating. Ask him to lend it to you. This

disposes of still more fruitless speculation about Lear's dead wife, Lady Macbeth's female children ("No son of mine succeeding"), and other red herrings for Gordon Bottomley's picking.

My reply :

10 Fairfax Road
N.W.6

March 17, '42

MY DEAR JOHN,

Many thanks for your letter. I could not more agree that dramatically the time-scheme in the plays is of little importance. W. S. was a dramatist first and last; he stuck to the clock when it suited him and threw it over when it didn't. Nobody seems to grasp my point; this is *the extent to which he, Shakespeare, was conscious of this*. I agree that Horatio doesn't tell Hamlet about Ophelia's death because of the surprise W. S. is preparing for Hamlet, who, if he knows whose grave is being made, cannot have all that back-chat with the gravedigger. Horatio's silence would be right even if Horatio knew. But he doesn't. He leaves the Court some five or six minutes before the Queen arrives with the news. *Does Shakespeare consciously arrange for Horatio not to know? Or is it subconscious?*

But how absolute W. S. is when he wants to be! How about the month in which the Banquet Scene takes place? We know that the meal is fixed for seven o'clock. The murderers intercept Banquo say at half-past six. In what month, then, is it so dark in Northern latitudes at six-thirty that despite the "streaks of day" Fleance must carry a torch? I suggest that the Meteorological Office would be able to tell us. The point is not of the slightest importance, but it's fun. Do you remember a couple of books which appeared some years ago pretending to take the Sherlock Holmes stories as authentic history, and in reconstructing Watson's career from them had to smooth out such difficulties as how he came to be studying at Cambridge, I think it was, and wounded in Afghanistan in the same summer? I suggest that this is the spirit in which to approach Shakespeare's time-schemes.

One question. Do you play the last act with grubby hands? Presumably Macbeth has been busy all day setting the castle defences in order. Yet I have seen Macbeths who apparently spent the time they were off the stage in a toilet saloon, coming on for the fifth act waving lily hands. I shall be more than interested to see how much older you make Macbeth. I

have always put it at round about a couple of years. If I am right about this then Shakespeare is a better moralist than Willie Maugham, who suggests in one of his stories that a man and woman settling down together after murdering the husband will have forgotten all about the incident after a twelvemonth. In any case I am immensely looking forward to your first night in town. If your performance is better than it was it must be tremendous.

Ever your
JAMES AGATE

March 18 An irritating morning. First, a letter from one of *Wednesday.* my editors saying that an article made intentionally out of quotations suggests that I am not working. "Hear'st thou, Mars?" As I am grinding my teeth, a proof arrives showing that another article carefully divided by me into seven paragraphs of seventeen lines each has been cut up into twenty snippets of six lines each. I am in the middle of a violent row on the telephone about this when the postman arrives with a bulky parcel marked "Immediate. Open at once." I do so, and find a five-act blank-verse drama entitled *The Great Lexicographer*. "With acknowledgments to the author of *Irene*."

March 19 Big crowd last night at the Westminster for the *Thursday.* first performance of Lajos Biro's *School for Slavery*. A powerful piece of work, though I don't much care for Meloganda, my new portmanteau word for the combination of melodrama and propaganda. The melodramatic half is too much like butchering Warsaw to entertain Westminster, while the propagandist half is preaching to the converted. However it went off very well.

March 20 Johnson deplored "the wicked inclination in most *Friday.* people to suppose an old man decayed in his intellects." But aren't they happier who do so decay? To die in full flush of mental vigour is like leaving a party at its height; to be faintly bored, yawn a little, and slip away is the thing. I am conscious of approaching the bored period, of substituting past interest for present curiosity. I am not wildly excited about the plays this country is going to produce from

now till I am ninety. Yet I thrill to read in a copy of the *Theatrical Observer* for Oct. 30, 1822, which some kind person has sent me, that Thomas Holcroft's *The Road to Ruin* has been revived at Drury Lane, and that "Mr Munden's Old Dornton and Mr Elliston's Harry Dornton cannot be seen too often and will never cease to be admired." Rightly or wrongly I refuse to squander enthusiasm on any of the symphonies, concertos, or what-not that this country is going to produce during the next twenty-six years; I shall not have time to grow the necessary ears. Conversely I am enormously interested in the programme of a concert given by the Philharmonic just over a hundred years ago, the programme of which was enclosed with the *Theatrical Observer*.

There were two parts. Part One started with a monster plate of hors d'œuvres, Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. This was followed by Malibran (!) and Donzelli in a duet by Cimarosa. Septet by Hummel—all right if you like Hummel and septets—Aria from Rossini's imitator Pacini, sung by Lablache. Which convinces me that I've lived a hundred years too late. Says Grove :

Lablache's head was noble, his figure very tall, and so atoning for his bulk, which became immense in later years : yet he never looked too tall on the stage. One of the boots of Lablache would have made a small portmanteau ; one could have clad a child in one of his gloves. His strength was enormous. In an interval of tedious rehearsing, he was once seen on the stage to pick up with one hand a double bass that was standing in the orchestra, examine it at arm's length, and gently replace it where he had found it. The force of his voice exceeded, when he chose, the tone of the instruments that accompanied it and the noise and clamour of the stage ; nothing drowned his portentous notes, which rang through the house like the booming of a great bell.

That was singing, whatever the quietist school of critics may hold. An overture by Cherubini, and then the Interval. Part Two. Symphony by Haydn followed by Scena from Zingarelli's *Giulietta e Romeo* sung by Malibran. Next a Concerto for violin by de Bériot, played by the composer. (This could have been No. 7, which Edward played and I accompanied when we were boys. A charming piece, even to-day.) An air, again by

Cimarosa, for Donzelli, after which the *Coriolan* Overture brought the concert to a close.

Let me face it. *I am not, and never have been, a critic.* According to received opinion a critic is a person who puts himself in the artist's place, sees the problem as it presented itself to the artist, and decides how far the artist has succeeded. *Je m'en fiche de tout cela !* I care nothing at all for problems and how they have been solved ; I am a taster, not a schoolmaster allocating marks. If I don't like the flavour of the meat, what is it to me that the cook had no oven and only a mcagre fire to roast her joint by ? If I don't like the last movement of the Jupiter Symphony, what do I care that it is a masterpiece of contrapuntalism ? If the sounds produced by Messrs Berg, Bloch, Florent Schmitt and Anton von Webern give my ear no pleasure, do I care how many problems they have invented ? And the same with poetry, drama, and the novel. Modern painting ? But I happen to like the *look* of a kipper on a plate as Braque saw it.

Did Art stop short, then, with the Empress Joséphine ? Substituting Edward the Seventh, and speaking broadly, all the art that interests me, yes. I should be quite content if the novel had stopped with Wells's *Mr Polly*, poetry with Meredith's *Love in the Valley*, music with the Marschallin's Indian summer, and the drama with the felling of the trees in Madame Ranevsky's cherry orchard. But art is not going to stop to please me, and I do my best to keep an open mind. Open ?—says somebody. Well, "partly open, my Lord," as Serjeant Snubbin said.

March 28 This being the centenary of the death of Stendhal, I *Monday.* am wondering how my friend Obadiah Straitlace would reconcile his provincial notions about the spiritual nature of love with the one hundred and sixty-seventh chapter of *De l'Amour*. I have looked up the chapter, and here it is :

CLXVII

LE PÈRE ET LE FILS

Dialogue de 1787

LE PÈRE (ministre de la . . .).

« Je vous félicite, mon fils ; c'est une chose fort agréable

pour vous d'être invité chez M. le duc d' . . . ; c'est une distinction pour un homme de votre âge. Ne manquez pas d'être au Palais à six heures précises.

LE FILS.

« Je pense, monsieur, que vous y dînez aussi ? »

LE PÈRE.

« M. le duc d' . . . toujours parfait pour notre famille, vous engageant pour la première fois, a bien voulu m'inviter aussi. »

Le fils, jeune homme fort bien né et de l'esprit le plus distingué, ne manque pas d'être au Palais à six heures. On servit à sept. Le fils se trouva placé vis-à-vis du père. Chaque convive avait à côté de soi une femme nue. L'on était servi par un vingtaine de laquais en grande livrée.

By the same post arrives Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* with this dedication :

To James Agate this copy of the *Anatomy* a book that gave pleasure to Dr Samuel Johnson and John Keats in the hope that it will please him.

A. N. DE C. ANDRADE.

Edward browsed much in this book of which I have never possessed a copy. I open at random and read :

Clearchus vowed to his friend Amyander in Aristænetus, that the most attractive part in his mistress, to make him love and like her first, was her pretty leg and foot : a soft and white skin, etc., have their peculiar graces, *Nebula haud est mollior ac hujus cutis est, œdipol papillam bellulam*. Though in men these parts are not so much respected ; a grim Saracen sometimes,—*nudus membra Pyracmon*, a martial hirsute face pleaseth best ; a black man is a pearl in a fair woman's eye, and is as acceptable as lame Vulcan was to Venus ; for he being a sweaty fuliginous blacksmith, was dearly beloved of her, when fair Apollo, nimble Mercury were rejected, and the rest of the sweet-faced gods forsaken. Many women (as Petronius observes) *sordibus calent* (as many men are more moved with kitchen wenches, and a poor market maid, than all these illustrious court and city dames) will sooner dote upon a slave, a servant, a dirt dauber, a cook, a player, if they see his naked legs or arms, *thorasque brachia*, etc., like that huntsman Meleager in Philostratus, though he be all in rags, obscene and dirty, besmeared like a ruddleman, a gipsy, or a chimney-

sweeper, than upon a noble gallant, Nireus, Epestion, Alcibiades, or those embroidered courtiers full of silk and gold.

One way or another we seem to have travelled a long way from Obadiah's country.

March 27 An unknown lady presents me with a fine malacca
Friday. walking-stick which belonged to Harrison Ainsworth.

March 28 At A. P. Herbert's suggestion I have sent a note
Saturday. to Herbert Morrison, the point being that suppression of the *Daily Mirror* might conceivably be the greater of two evils, since the working classes haven't the brains to understand that such suppression, even if ten times justified, is not an attack on their liberties. Made the proposal that if the Home Office is driven to suppress the *Mirror* it should on the same day experimentally and conditionally lift the ban on the *Daily Worker*, thus removing all suggestion of class prejudice.

March 29 To Felstead in Essex. Andrade, Eckersley, Bill
Sunday. Barrett, Col. Brough, and Mark Hambourg. Kenneth Barnes as Question Master. Very jolly, except that one way or another we had to walk more than some of us bargained for. Half a mile to tea, half a mile to the hall to rehearse the mikes—actually we persuaded these nice, sensible people to let us do without them—half a mile to dinner, half a mile to the hall. My asthma makes me hate walking at any time, but to have to do this with a fleet of motor-cars hanging around doing nothing annoys me. Also the Eastern Command had a show to-day postponed from last Sunday because of the fog, and the men came back too tired to bother about us. The result was that the hall, which had been booked up, was half empty.

But why does nobody ask me the question to which I have the answer pat, seeing that I have learned it by heart ?

Question. *How can I become a dramatic critic ?*

Answer. It all depends upon the type of paper you are aiming at. If you want to write in the popular Press about schoolgirls turning themselves into star-actresses overnight—which is what that institution understands as dramatic criticism—then you should waylay some popular editor in his

favourite night haunt, and impress him with your knowledge of the private lives of crooners, insinuate that you hold Shakespeare to be a back number, Tchegov a dud, and Shaw an irresponsible pantaloon. Let him glean that you write even more vulgarly than you think. If, on the other hand, you are aiming at a paper which takes its criticism seriously, I should give you three pieces of serious advice.

One. Study the works of Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Shakespeare, Marlowe, Webster, Ford, Beaumont and Fletcher, Molière, Racine, Corneille, Dryden, Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh, Farquhar, Lessing, Schiller, Goldsmith, Sheridan, Ibsen, Strindberg, Sudermann, Hauptmann, Pinero, Wilde, Synge, Galsworthy, O'Neill, O'Casey, Shaw. "But," you say, "I shall be forty before I have mastered these." To which I reply that you must be at least forty before your opinions can have any value.

Two. Study the dramatic criticisms of Hazlitt, Lewes, Archer, Shaw, Montague, Walkley, Beerbohm.

Three. Learn to write English, leave French alone, and avoid quotation unless you are a master of it.

March 30 At the end of my lunch with Ernest Helme the other
Monday. day I asked him to let me have a résumé of what he had said. He promised, and here it is :

Patti. The great Patti was once asked, reputedly by the Empress Eugénie, with what Maestro she had taken lessons. The reply was "Mon Maestro—le bon Dieu."

I myself heard her assert that she had never studied voice-production with anyone, but that as a child she had been in the room when her step-brother, Ettore Barili, had been teaching her own two elder sisters, Amalia (the contralto who married Strakosch) and Carlotta (a phenomenally high *soprano sfogato* who was lame and whose only operatic rôle, therefore, was the Queen of Night in *The Magic Flute*, and who eventually married de Monck, the 'cellist). But Patti was coached in cadenzas specially composed for her by her brother-in-law, Maurice Strakosch.

Patti was extraordinarily careful of herself and ever studiously avoided fatigue, even to the pitch of deputising Strakosch to appear for her in rehearsals. Incredible though it may sound, my parents, who were exacting and highly

competent critics, always asserted that this lack of rehearsal was never perceptible when she appeared. When Patti was touring in South America, it was stipulated that she should appear on the observation platform of her saloon in the Patti Special Train, and people paid to stand on the station to see her. She, on her part, stipulated that a detachment of soldiers was to be detailed as guard on the train because of her jewels, and also in the wings of the opera house. When she appeared as Semiramide or as Violetta her jewels were assessed at £395,000.

Grassini. Madame Grassini was equally admired by Napoleon and the Duke of Wellington, and I believe that an extraordinary clause in her contract was included permitting her to insert either "Felicità" or "Infelicità" wherever she wished in her arias, as either of these words greatly facilitated the emission of her high notes.

Rossini. Rossini detested the unnecessary interpolation of top notes without his sanction, and never admired French voices—more especially French tenors. Tamberlik, though Italian by birth, had a harsh voice and was inordinately attached to his high C (ut de poitrine). At that time he was appearing in a revival of *William Tell* at the Grand Opera in Paris and had greatly incensed Rossini by interpolating a number of his favourite high notes, as if there were not already enough in Arnoldo's arias! Rossini had always been "not at home" when Tamberlik had called on him, but at last, just as the composer was about to commence his macaroni, his butler announced that the detested singer was in the ante-chamber. Madame Colbran, whom Rossini subsequently married, intervened, and cajoled the infuriated composer into granting the tenor an interview. Rossini roared out to his butler to tell Signor Tamberlik that he was to leave his high notes with his coat in the hall.

Catalani. Catalani was the most famous soprano of her day, was the possessor of a voice of phenomenal range, and was engaged for a musical festival at Winchester for the *Messiah*; being very much a *prima donna assoluta*, she selected the arias of the other soloists and had them transposed to suit her voice. *Comfort ye* as well as *Why do the Nations* were so treated. But this was not all; Monsieur Valabrègue, her husband, proceeded to demand the fees of the remaining soloists, and on the festival committee remonstrating, is said to have rejoined "Et pourquoi pas? C'est ma femme, et les autres ne sont que des poupées."



By kind permission of Mrs. Edna Acworth

Leo Paria
By Carl Wright



My Favourite Picture

By E. Perry

[See page 217]

Madge Kendal. I well recollect the agitation aroused by the fact that, as Lady Gay Spanker, Mrs Kendal lifted her green riding habit up to within a few inches of the top of her riding boots, which she gently tapped with her riding whip. Never was there a more astute bit of theatrical business. The réclame was enormous; first in London amongst the Victorian matrons, and next in the provinces, where houses were sold out. The Canons' wives were rocked with curiosity at this hint of impropriety on the part of one always held to be the legitimate successor to the dear Queen's beloved Helen Faucit. The manoeuvre was the sole topic of conversation in the Close of each cathedral city visited by her company, and the County was divided as to whether its blushing daughters should be taken to the theatre on the evenings when *London Assurance* was to be played. I recollect my father saying to me (I think it was at the St James's Theatre), "This will prove a great financial asset." He was right, though except as Lady Clancarty and as one of the Merry Wives, he was not an admirer of her. He was never tired of quoting a saying attributed to Tom Robertson: "My sister Madge was lucky to have me to write plays for her, but I was luckier to have Marie Wilton to make successes of them."

Sarah Bernhardt. I remember once going to Victoria Station to meet my aunt who was returning from Paris. Whilst waiting, I noticed Irving and Ellen Terry on the platform, as well as other artists. My aunt said, "Let us wait. Sarah is on the train." She certainly was. It was her first visit to this country after her operation. I have often seen Sarah Bernhardt on the stage, but that descent from that carriage relegated all previous triumphs to second place; the timing, the embraces, the absorption of the onlookers into a sort of international reception committee—all this was unforgettable. And not the least perfect thing was the subordination of Ellen Terry and Irving, so that she should have the whole stage. How superbly she held it!

April 1 Debate at Greenford with Bill Barrett. Moved
Wednesday. that in the opinion of the Ordnance Corps the world's most mischievous inventions have been the Printing Press, the Steam and Internal Combustion Engines, the Cinema, and the Wireless. Good fun and a brilliantly specious peroration:

"The world's greatest book was written before the invention of printing. Michael Angelo, Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci,

and Rembrandt never knew of the steam engine, the motor-car, or the aeroplane. Garrick, Kean, Siddons, and Irving knew nothing of the cinema. Bach, Handel, Mozart, and Beethoven composed their masterpieces before the wireless was thought of. My opponent has stated that I am against progression. That is true. I am a passionate advocate for retrogression. You have all heard of the great painter and poet, William Blake. How did Mr and Mrs Blake spend their Sunday afternoons? Did they read the *News of the World* or the *Sunday Pictorial*? Did they go for a jaunt in the car? Did they go to the cinema? Did they turn on the wireless? No. They did none of these things. They took off their clothes and sat in the garden naked."

The motion was lost by 67 votes to 18.

April 2 Some days ago I received a letter from a soldier
Thursday. saying he enlisted to fight and not to be mucked
 about, that he was completely "browned-off," and
what were my views on desertion? I bunged Milton's *Sonnet on his Blindness* at him together with a Screed in my *Noblest Vein*. Received letter to-day saying "Thanks, old cock, but isn't the Milton *views jeu*? In any case I prefer this bit from Ignatius Loyola." Bit enclosed.

April 8 Spent the evening dipping into *The Dramatic Censor*
Friday. by Francis Gentleman (1728-84). I confess I am
 more than a little envious of the freedom allowed to
the old dramatic critics. Who to-day could write without fear of being pursued at law such a sentence as: "Mr Brown, by some thought a good actor, though certainly the worst that ever was seen, faint, indescriptive and laborious"? This is the age when you may not even say that a man is "a bad actor." On consulting a lawyer about this I received a letter from him saying: "Certainly you may not say anything of the kind. You may not even say that Miss Pretty Thing is a bad actress." And he set down in writing the name of one of our best-known players. I still like to read about "Mr Love, the bloody murderer of blank verse." . . . "Mrs Mattocks, a very useful actress, but rather under-acts tragedy, and overdoes comedy,—singing we take no notice of." . . . "Miss Miller, nothing but partial managerial favour could have produced, or supported, this Lady." . . .

"Mr Bensley—if this gentleman was but half as great a favourite with the public as he is with the manager, he would be happily stationed; we always view him most favourably in a Turkish dress, though he can never make a Turkish countenance, his features being much more of a Chinese cast." . . . "Mrs Pritchard was, from corpulence, so very absurd in appearance, that however our ears might be pleased, our eyes were offended."

April 4 Baffled more than ever by that odd creature, Leo
Saturday. Pavia, who drinks the drains of other people's tea-cups, puts the butt-ends of my cigars into his pipe, and at the Café Royal the other day, seeing that a total stranger at the next table proposed to leave a leg of chicken, stuck his fork into it, and, transferring it to his plate, snarled, "I disapprove of waste." I have been looking recently at his "Journal," a quarter-of-a-million-word haggis informed by a spite, rancour, and venom unequalled in my reading. As the reader guesses, the best of it is unprintable and unquotable, besides furnishing the Courts with enough libel actions for twenty years. I have advised him that in the unlikely event of his book being published, he should call it by some such name as *Contortions and Grimaces*. Here are a few extracts described by Leo as "harmless":

INTAGLIO

Deum Bangeuses. Sophie Menter played with such force that she hardly left a hammer intact. I remember an amusing caricature in the *World* depicting the pianist performing with her usual ferocious expression, hair falling down, boots burst asunder, and keys and piano strings flying in all directions, including the faces of the audience in flight.

Equally vigorous was Teresa Carreño, who was also a pugilist, and nearly murdered her three husbands. She made such a noise that no one could stay in the same room, and guests were invited on to another floor. Her recitals at St James's Hall were unsuccessful at first, because people become stone-deaf. Afterwards hardly anybody appeared at all, a great crowd gathering in Regent Street, people having discovered that one could hear the Señora quite as well from there without having to pay for admission. Finally, the matter was adjusted, and

when the Señora gave a recital in St James's Hall, the audience was accommodated in the Bechstein Hall.

Theodor Leschetizky. Paderewski was the prize pig in the expensive sty of old Theodor Leschetizky. L. has the reputation of being the greatest teacher in the world, a man of culture and charm endowed with a compelling personality, and capable of imparting a method of piano technique which was infallible. I had two years of him, and all I can say is that I found none of these things. He drove me to despair with his rudeness, his brutality, his irritability, and his hatred. It seems strange that this old man of sixty should have hated a boy of seventeen full of devotion, sensibility, and intelligence, already an excellent pianist, but, alas, as a consequence of the infallible Method, never to be one again. For the Method had only one effect on my hands—it crippled them for life. Apart from the finger-tortures which must have been invented by Torquemada, he actually taught me very little. A curious blend of cold-bloodedness and Slav ferocity, he had the mind of a mechanician; he was almost wholly interested in technique, fingering, velocity, and such-like. As regards his culture, he never read a book. Apart from the one or two lessons he gave daily, he did nothing except eat, drink, smoke cigars, and play billiards or that complex game called tarok. Have I nothing to say in his favour? He was a marvellous pianist, one of the best I ever heard. He was clean, accurate, elegant, his touch was a wonder of lyric beauty, and his pedalling a revelation. This is the first truthful account of the monster I have ever known anyone give.

The Premier Marquis. I have been reading a book about the Marquis de Sade, a joy to me ever since I had my first glimpse (*aet.* 17) of the *Psychopathia Sexualis* of Krafft-Ebing. Later Iwan Bloch showed me his copy of *Justine* with curious engravings representing people in attitudes reminiscent of those *spintrix* which so delighted the Emperor Tiberius at Capri. De S. can be called the father of modern sex-psychology; some of his horrors have never been improved upon. In his inventiveness, in the numberless and seemingly inexhaustible involutions, convolutions, and intricacies of his theme, he reminds one of J. S. Bach—Verzeihung, Herr Cantor!

A Clever Horse. I saw a film yesterday called *Florian*, dealing with life in the Vienna of my day. The usual tissue of absurdities and improbabilities. The only talent in the whole production was shown by the horse Florian. What an actor is this Florian, what finesse, what art, the dignity of an Irving and the charm of

an Ellen Terry! The horse also dances with the grace of Nijinsky, and some of the nuances of his voice remind one of John Gielgud. The only thing he did not do was to sing, but I am convinced he could have done the last scene of *Götterdämmerung* as well as Eva Turner, had he been so disposed.

New Material about Goya. Kathi Klosettuch, a blue-stocking in the best Hôtel de Rambouillet tradition, tells me of an interesting meeting at a refugee concert with an old Spanish painter of some repute, whose father knew Goya intimately. "A most delightful old man, this Spaniard. His name is Don Sierra de Garbanzos y Tortadilla, and he claims to be the stepson of Pablo Cantankeranos. He told me that Goya in his old age conceived a passion for English jam, and would often drop large flakes of this sticky compound on to his pantaloons. Don Sierra's father noticed how fond the children of Madrid were of the old painter, and how they would clamour to sit on his knees. But there was always so much jam on them, and indeed, on the front and back of his coat as well, that the little dears found it impossible to detach themselves, and thus Goya could often be seen walking round the Sol des Guergas with adhesive infants sticking to every part of his body. This story interested me hugely, as I can find no mention of it in any of the Official Biographies, neither in *Tortas de Hombres*, nor *Schreimacher*, nor the new book on Goya by François Poteloptoptopemos." I congratulated the Fräulein on the dexterity with which she pronounced this last. She said, "But it's on everybody's tongue."

Baron Corvo. I have just finished a book by A. J. A. Symons about a curious criminal who flourished in the early part of this century, a pugnacious and vitriolic sponger who wrote a few precious but to me totally unreadable novels, full of self-invented neologisms, mere exercises in windy rhetoric. His title was a fake; he was a megalomaniac, a swindler, a pimp, and an incorrigibly ungrateful and insidious rogue. Yet such was his genius that scores of dupes continued to pour out money, and even affection, on a scamp who was one of de Sade's less pleasing monsters come to life. He had the wit to realise that the worse you treat people, the better they will treat you—one of the Marquis's precepts. He was a converted Catholic who loathed other Catholics; a writer who detested other writers; a philosopher who hated mankind. He was ugly, he was affected, he was rude; he had no humour; he was from start to finish nothing but a human pustule, a leech, and a blackmailer. Yet his life was one long series of sojourns in luxurious houses, trips to the Continent,

fantastic kindnesses from priests, publishers, financiers. He was the most indefatigable begging-letter writer the world has ever known, and one of the most successful. Fielding would have been amused by him. He would certainly have called him a Great Man.

Jacob Marl. So Jacob Marl is dead at last! I have most unpleasant memories of him. Apart from his undoubted fondness for my piano-playing he wounded and insulted me at every turn. Marl was only in the most limited sense a great painter. He lacked invention, and painted the same picture over and over again, the same ruined walls, the same curtains, the same nondescript little figures—a monotonous design of which ultimately every one got heartily tired. Later Marl left off painting, as there was no sale for the walls and the curtains and the little figures, and his vogue died, and by the time *he* died he was forgotten. But he had his points—wit and courage. George Prompt, the actor, witnessed an amusing scene in the Haymarket one day when Jacob espied a critic who had fallen foul of one of his pictures. Jacob, smiling sweetly, hails the critic, and says, “Are you so-and-so?” The critic answers “Yes.” “Then take that!” says Jacob, giving him a tremendous biff and knocking him into the gutter. I thought it rather an anticlimax when George related that immediately afterwards Marl picked the critic up, brushed his coat, and dragged him into the Pall Mall bar to have a drink. Marl’s later years were tragic. He couldn’t paint any more, and did nothing except get drunk at his friends’ expense. Then illness set in, his past glories of big houses and large studios vanished, he lived alone in a little room in Hinter-Kensington, hoarse, dirty, and forgotten. An unpleasant, narrow-minded man. A stingy and malicious sponger, with never a good word for other artists, and feared and detested by his acquaintances.

Sexual Aberrations. Are you interested in Sexual Aberrations? Of course you are, if you are an ordinary, normal, clean-minded Briton. Well, I have just finished reading a German book on the subject; it is called *Die nervösen Störungen des geschlechtlichen Adernsystems*. It is by Dr Hans Pfitzmann, and was published in Berlin in 1936. Some of the cases of fetishism are highly interesting. That of the ink-swallower of Düsseldorf—a Post Office employee who successfully pleaded that red ink in large quantities, which he could only get by stealing, was necessary to enable him to do his duty by the Fatherland—was the direct incentive to the famous meeting of Psychiatrists in Munich in 1930, consisting of Professors Dietrich, Mosenthal,

Leibnitz, Schwerin, and Doctor Kurz Lang. A Guest, Doctor le Seuillade from Amiens, made a speech on Vitilism and described a rare case of Ferine Cataplatitis amongst the natives of New Caledonia. A valuable addition to the research work already undertaken in connection with the ink-swallowing case was made by Professor Kramnitz (Essen) who quoted Vitruvius, Pliny, Ovid and Lampridius Aper amidst much laughter.

Among the other interesting cases are those of the young Czech poetess who would run for hours after old men with no teeth, Klara N——, the Munich mannequin who was excited by chewing match-boxes, the Hungarian Baroness three times arrested for attacking young men in the street with a horse-whip dipped in vitriol, and the forty-year-old chef, Karl Schütz of Lübeck, who was so much obsessed by tennis balls that he served them up as *œufs à la cocotte*. And, of course, the astounding case of Johanna Leschauer, a nurse in Leipzig, who murdered and ate seven of her lovers within six months. She confessed that the wild ecstasies which the devouring of these caused her were as nothing compared to the thought of eating her own dead body. "It is difficult to see," adds Dr Pfiztermann, "how she hoped to accomplish this." Most interesting of all, perhaps, is the case of the lion-fetishist. Dr Magnus Brausesalz, the eminent brain-specialist, was in the habit of giving lectures at which visitors with some problem to solve were received. The Doctor said on one of these occasions, "I have an interesting case in my waiting-room." Whereupon he called the patient, and a bespectacled little man appeared and was introduced as Dr X., Professor of Egyptology at the University of Klopstock. The Professor said, "Gentlemen, I am a Zoophilist. I love lions. From my earliest youth I have been attracted by lions. When I go to a Zoological Gardens and watch the lions I . . . but perhaps I need not particularise." At this point Dr Brausesalz, who was not famous for his sense of humour, interrupted: "I should point out, *meine Herren*, that this predilection of the Professor has up to the present been singularly devoid of reciprocity."

April 5 Sunday. That last-war favourite, *The Maid of the Mountains*, is here again. One of the questions asked at the Brains Trust last Sunday was "Why is it that, whereas between the last war and this the general interest in books and music has deepened, theatrical taste has remained the same?" Joad would have doubted the truth of the question, and if I am to believe Ivor Brown, I must doubt also. Ivor tells

us in the *Observer* to-day about Hanley's reception of *The Cherry Orchard*. "It packed the house throughout the week. How Arnold Bennett would have enjoyed the spectacle of Madame Ranevsky triumphant among the Staffordshire pot-banks! Yet not so long ago Tchekhov was deemed unintelligible by London's intellectuals." *But how does Ivor suppose the Hanleyites describe the play to their families when they get home?*

If the Coliseum must have a musical play about gipsies, what about *Carmen*? The answer is another question: What in 1917 did the audience listening to José Collins care about Don José? Has there ever been a period in English taste when *Carmen* could run for 1352 consecutive performances? No. Why in view of the enormous popularity of *Die Fledermaus* did not the Coliseum management put on the same composer's *Der Zigeunerbaron*? The reason is that the two publics are different publics. You have to be something of a musician to get the best out of Strauss, whereas County cricketers, Rugger Blues, heavy-weight boxers snuggling up to the female of their kind and crushing tiny but far-from-frozen hands in K.O. mitts—all these, the backbone of the nation, demand nothing more of drama and music than a maid, a mountain, violet darkness, and a restful waltz.

"So this was the hand we were bluffed with!" Montague wrote about "the penitent wife looking in at her deserted husband's, and in the nick of time, to die in state on the drawing-room sofa fortified by the rites of the old Dumasian ethics—'Vous me pardonnez, n'est-ce pas?' 'Ah! ce n'est pas à vous qu'il faut pardonner; c'est à moi,' etc." The temperamental maiden alternately yelling curses and screaming for forgiveness, and both in three-four time, is the hand with which the great British public was bluffed in the last war, and will be bluffed in this.

The Saturday night audience seemed to like Sylvia Cecil, a *soprano sfogato* if ever there was one. (I thank thee, Ernest Helme, for teaching me that word.) Malcolm Keen is the leader of the bandits, and a good plucked 'un at that. Not for ten times any ransom Baldassarre ever thought of would I stand between guards and declaim, with the solemnity of Buckingham going to his divorce of steel:

Farewell, my love, don't grieve for me,
These things, you know, must sometimes be;
We've had our good times in the past,
We can't expect they'll always last.

But then I doubt whether I should look as well as Malcolm did last night in his eau-de-nil tunic and powder-blue mantle.

Easter Monday. A sad little sum :

James Agate, Esq.

In account with Hutchinson & Co. Ltd.

SPEAK FOR ENGLAND

Statement for 12 months ending Dec. 31, 1941.

1941			
<i>Jan. 1.</i>	To Stock on Hand	...	1608
<i>Dec. 31.</i>	By Stock on Hand	584	
	Destroyed by enemy action	1069	1608
	<u>Sales</u>		<u>0</u>

April 7 To the Home Office, where in a comfortable arm-chair I elaborate the following theory: That a wise *Tuesday.* Government will devote at least as much care and time to answering unreasonable objections as reasonable ones. No man is a better fighter or worker for nursing a grievance even though it is an absurd one, and it should be somebody's business to find out what grievances the soldier, sailor, airman, or munition-worker may be nursing. If the grievance is imaginary then it should be easy to remove. My point, however, was not the imaginary grouse but the real ones which your sleek and well-fed Civil Servant cannot conceive. I suggested that these should be investigated by somebody other than civil servants. Morrison paid me the courtesy of complete attention, which was highly flattering. But I didn't come to be flattered, and I didn't feel that after I had gone somebody, not being a civil servant, would be told off to find out what grouses, imaginable and unimaginable, I had been talking of. The interview, in fact, served no purpose except to fill in a social half-hour charmingly.

April 8 Broadcast debate with Leslie Perowne. Subject : *Wednesday.* Straight music versus swing. Get off one good joke —that all swing compositions filched from the masterpieces should be lumped together under the title *In a*

Black Market Garden. Driving away afterwards, Commander Locker-Lampson explained to me the difference between my audience to-night and his. "Over the wireless you must speak to the point: in the House you mustn't. The House dislikes information, and hates to be told how far it is from Leningrad to Moscow, or how many boots the Army consumes per annum. Like any other popular assembly the House wants to be either amused or excited. I remember sitting next to Lloyd George when Simon made a magnificent speech which fell entirely flat. I asked Ll. G. why, and he said: 'Because it was relevant.' Ll. G. was right. Ramsay MacDonald was so irrelevant that they made him Prime Minister."

April 9 Thursday. P.C. from Jock saying "I liked your broadcast to-night. There was no argument whatever, but plenty of 'offence in't.'"

Ten days ago Jock sent me an excited p.c. saying that he had just heard Louis Kentner play the Diabelli Variations, and that I couldn't imagine how much fun, poetry, and grandeur he got out of them. I sent the p.c. to Kentner, and asked him to tell me when he was playing the Variations again, as I would go anywhere from Yarmouth to Penzance to hear them. The result was a meeting to-day when, in his studio at the bottom of the garden, he played the Variations to an audience of one. And played them superbly. I asked K. if he had ever timed them and how long they took. It was then about a quarter past one. K. said, "I think I began at 12.25. Anyway, I shall know when I look at my watch. It always stops at the exact moment I sit down to play at a concert, and sometimes when I want to play well in private." He pulled out his watch. It had stopped at 12.25.

Letter from a member of Harrap's staff:

Being in Chapel-en-le-Frith recently [where I lived and kept the ponies before the last war], I mentioned your name to one of the old-timers. He said, "Yes, I remember Mr Agate perfectly. *What is he doing now?*"

Also pleasant note from my agent concerning the moneys earned in 1941 by *Egos* 3 and 4.

Royalties from George G. Harrap & Co. to 31 December 1941				...	£3	1	4
Less 5 per cent. commission	£0	3	1				
Less account from Harrap	2	16	5		2	19	6
					<hr/>		
					£0	1	10
					<hr/>		

April 10 Herbert Farjeon shares my passion for lists. The six
Friday. most exciting vintage clarets, the six dullest British
composers—you know the sort of thing. A recent
essay of his on one's best week in the theatre, chosen eclectically,
has set me jotting down what I should choose if I could bring
back six nights at the play.

Can I doubt my first choice? Two lines from Dowson's
Impenitentia Ultima give it away.

And her eyes should be my light whilst the sun went out
behind me,
And the viols in her voice be the last sound in mine ear.

But in what? Not, I think, in any of the classic rôles. I want
to see her draw from her bosom the letter from le père Duval,
place the pillow on her knee and the letter on the pillow, smooth
it and put her hands over it. I want to hear her read by heart,
"Armand est loin, mais il reviendra vous demander non seule-
ment son pardon, mais le mien, car j'ai été forcé de vous faire
du mal et je veux le réparer. Soignez-vous bien, espérez;
votre courage et votre. . . ." I want to hear her gather pace
in the reading, as she always did, and then break down
at the word "abnégation," a little above Marguerite's
education.

After Sarah, Irving. No, not as Hamlet, "the hair looking
blue-black, like the plumage of a crow; the eyes burning—two
fires veiled by melancholy." (Ellen Terry, of course.) Nor yet
"looking like some beautiful grey tree that I have seen in
Havana." (Ellen.) Nor yet as that "great famished wolf,"
Macbeth. (Ellen again.) Not, indeed, in any of the classical
parts, nor even in *The Lyons Mail*, rifling the pockets of the
murdered postboy and murmuring, "You're a beauty, you are!"
I should want to see H. I. simply and straightforwardly dusting
the snow from his boots, and with his rare, exquisite smile refus-
ing the help of the little maid offering to take off his gaiters.

"Sargent tried to paint Henry's smile and gave it up," wrote Ellen. For my third evening I should want to be sitting once more in the front row of the pit in the Manchester Theatre Royal—one had to sit sideways because the stalls partition hurt one's knees—on that Saturday in December 1899, and watching Benson's Richard beguile his "sweet way to despair" by chopping poet's logic. Next I see a room, comfortably and tastefully, but not expensively, furnished. It is growing dusk, and the maidservant has not yet brought the lamp. A lady, dressed in the costume of the 'eighties, with her head bent over her work-basket, is listening to an obviously dying man. He leans forward, makes his declaration of lifelong attachment, and the lady, rising, says, "Let me pass, please," with the drop of a sixth between the second and third words. Janet Achurch is the Nora.

And now it begins to be difficult. Shall I, for my fifth evening, go back to April 1907, recapture that first night with the Irish National Theatre, and hold my breath as Arthur Sinclair in *The Shadow of the Glen* gives the world a new idiom? "It's lonesome roads she'll be going and hiding herself away till the end will come, and they find her stretched like a dead sheep with the frost on her, or the big spiders maybe, and they putting their webs on her, in the butt of a ditch." Or shall it be the first night of Galsworthy's *The Silver Box*, or Massfield's *Nam*? Shall it be Mrs Kendal in a miraculously disciplined dolman of maroon velvet seeking forgiveness from the top waistcoat button of a lord and master whose nose is in difficulties with his lady's puce bonnet? Shall it be Hawtrey doing nothing, yet with greater art than is possessed by a dozen of your modern actors who cannot keep still? Shall it be Guitry as Pasteur, or Sacha and Yvonne in *Mozart*? The Lunts perhaps? Some bitter comedy by Maugham, or witty farce by Noel? Or Shaw's *St Joan*? No. It shall be none of these. My fifth choice goes to Mrs Pat. But in what? In Echegaray's *Mariana*? As Hedda Gabler offended by Tesman's remark about his aunt-embroidered slippers, "You can't think how many associations cling to them," and returning a chilly "Scarcely for me"? Or in Sudermann's *Es lebe das Leben*—I can still hear the ring of the poison bottle as it falls on to the dessert plate? No. I think it must be as Paula Tanqueray. Pinero's ocean of sentiment may

have been false. But the seas were big, and this actress rode them.

Sixth place is impossible. Alas, that I have no room for Turgenev's *A Month in the Country*, or for Clare Eames in Jean-Jacques Bernard's *The Unquiet Spirit*. My last choice must be something by Tchekhov, the playwright who, next to Shakespeare, has given me the most delight. But which play? A Russian version I once saw of *The Cherry Orchard*, with Germanova as Madame Ranevsky, that part which has overthrown every English actress I have seen attempt it? (It has overthrown them because they have insisted on remaining English and indefatigable, and thus missing the Slav charm and indolence.) Komisarjevsky's production of *The Three Sisters*? *Uncle Vanya* with Jean Forbes-Robertson? No. For my last evening I choose Easter Sunday immediately before the war, at the little Théâtre des Mathurins, *The Seagull* with the Pitoëffs and again Germanova.

But stay. My theatrical week has a matinée which Farjeon forgot. For this I choose any bill at the old Oxford or Tivoli headed by Marie Lloyd singing *The Wedding March*, of which one verse and the chorus have remained in my memory!

Verse

The parson he turned up pertickerlerly late, you know;
 We thought, at first, he meant to leave us in the lurch;
 Bill's concertina, he
 Was going to play, you see,
 Till I said, "Hush, put that away, Bill, we're in church!"
 Dear mother, she had brought a little drop of 'tiddley,'
 That cheered us ladies up to wait a little while;
 And my married sister 'Liza
 Caused a regular surpiser,
 When she done a sailor's hornpipe down the aisle!

Chorus

And the weddin' bells were ringin',
 And the dicky birds were singin',
 As on Sunday mornin' we
 Went away to married be,
 Arm-in-arm, as stiff as starch;
 And we all sang "Mercy on us!"
 As the parson smiled upon us;
 Bill popp'd on the ring, and then
 Off to mother's home again,
 Why, we all done the Weddin' March!

I shall arrange, of course, to wind up the week with the music-hall, Marie, and the old lilt that brings back my youth.

April 11 The best turn in a poor revue at the Whitehall is a
Saturday. troupe of Chinese tumblers, exquisite dolls wearing
 our dress with far more coquetry and elegance than
the oafish West could wear theirs. What I admire about them
most is not their technical skill, but the way they beam their
superior intellects to an audience for which they must have complete
contempt, and the obsequious grace with which they take
the sting out of that contempt. Not for one second, in the
course of their most difficult feats, does the smile leave their sad
little faces. As I watched them to-night I thought of a poem I
read during the last war, Maurice Magre's *La Tristesse du Nain
Chinois*, the Chinese dwarf who refused to dance for his western
hirers.

Le fouet tourbillonna sur le nain impassible ;
Les mirlitons criaient et claquaient les drapeaux ;
Dans sa face immobile ainsi qu'en une cible
La patronne planta son épingle à chapeau.

Et le lutteur vint lui donner la bastonnade,
Et la foire chanta son plaisir, ses amours. . . .
Toujours le nain voyait parmi le bleu des jades
Un Bouddha souriant au fond du demi-jour.

But the feet of the Lai-Founs are far from mirthless, and their
faces smile without the aid of hat-pins.

April 16 As I see it modern invention, which means the
Thursday. loud-speaker and the cine-camera, is striking at
 the very roots of two arts—music and the drama.
Creatures with no voices are now accepted as singers, and I can
foresee the same thing happening to pianists and fiddlers with
no tone. What, in the future, will not amplifiers do to the
orchestra, with a cunning distribution of microphones to give
balance where there is none ? And already we accept the film
actor as an actor. The architect, the painter, and the sculptor
will presumably remain immune. And I thank Heaven that
nothing can come between the writer and the paper before him,
that no megaphone exists or can be invented to give him swell
of soul.

1942]

EGO 5

April 18 Letter from John Gielgud :
Saturday.

6 Sunnyside
Princes Park
Liverpool, 8
April 17, 1942

DEAR JAMES,

Many thanks for your gay letter. To reply to your questions categorically, I make up my hands light brown—as Ellen says H. I. always did for a costume part (except 18th century) and I never wash them again in *Macbeth* after I have done them again after getting rid of the blood—so that you may take it they are grubby enough for the last act. But don't imagine that the time off the stage is very long—about twelve to fifteen minutes by the clock, though the boredom of Malcolm's self-accusation scene may give an impression of longer time. And none too much either to change wig and make-up—about two years is right, I should say. On this tour I've had to play at two and six on matinée days, murder indeed, and I should like to know what Messrs Macready, Irving, and Salvini (to put myself in no more distinguished company) would have said to such an effort.

There was a very nice misprint in the *Liverpool Echo* on Wednesday, paying tribute to our broad comedian George Woodbridge, who plays the Porter, as "an engaging Portia." I could not forbear to murmur that the quality of Mersey is not strained.

Yours ever

JOHN

April 19 Jack Hulbert and Cicely Courtneidge have obviously
Sunday. modelled *Full Swing* on the *Thin Man* series of films.

Plus ça change, plus ça gets funnier. Cicely's best scene last night was one in a *cabinet particulier* which would make the Dietrich look to her laurels. Got up as a ridiculous adventuress, she discards a furlong of silver fox to reveal shoulders dazzling "dans tout l'éclat de leur blanche nudité," as Mau-passant puts it. "Whence does Madame derive the whiteness of her *omoplates exquis*?" asks the villain. "Persil," says Cicely in abrupt descent to a domesticity the Dietrich knows nothing about. Another scene in which the pair go folk-dancing reminded me of a passage in Osbert Sitwell's *Miracle on Sinai* :

Then, again, it was known that when, for two years, Enfelon and Miss Sipwater had made their home—or, rather, hut—in

the Congo, they were, after a month or two, successful in persuading the natives to allow them, triumphantly nude, if a little self-conscious, to take part in the ritual dances of the tribe. And the sceptical and unworthy, and even the convinced, could not but laugh at the vision of these queer figures, giraffe-like and gossamer, careering and caracoling round the jungle-fires of Africa, wildly waving their assegais and stamping their bunioned feet, in order to learn "the proper cultural rhythm of the country."

And didn't Richard Burton and his lady behave in much the same way in all seriousness?

April 20 A correspondence with a young and undoubted poet.
Monday.

Private H. K. Hopkins

Derby

April 7, 1942

DEAR MR AGATE,

Persistence is all very well at this end, but what about *your* reaction? I don't want to make a bloody nuisance of myself.

If you read my first Grasshopper Broadsheet, you didn't let on. I hoped, naturally enough, even if too fondly, that somewhere a word would be squeezed into your reviewing in its favour; or even against; for it is indifference that kills. Now I return to the attack, but for the last time. If you cannot feel interested in these further three Broadsheets I shall leave you in peace. If there is nothing you can do in the way of a notice, is it unreasonable to hope you will wish to receive subsequent issues for their own sake and for yours? It is a delicate matter, but not to hum and ha too much, the subscription for twelve issues (of which you have had four, though this isn't your fault) is 8s. 6d. post free.

Please don't let me have to write you off a total loss.

Yours faithfully

KENNETH HOPKINS

10 *Fairfax Road, N.W.6*

April 18th, 1942

DEAR PRIVATE HOPKINS,

You reproach me with not advertising your poem and those of your friends. But suppose I don't consider the stuff good (a) at any time and (b) at this time?

On the first point I think that the stuff you print is poetry. But I suggest that poetry at the wrong time is like matter in the wrong place; and we know what name science gives to that. Which leads me to the second point. I see nothing about the poet, or any other kind of artist, which entitles him to divorce his work from his country's need to-day. I am not suggesting that you young fellows should all set about re-writing Kipling's *Absent-minded Beggar*. But I do say that any poetry which is likely to depress or discourage the soldier, sailor, airman, and munition worker is bad poetry to-day. I hold this so strongly that I would, while the war lasts, tactfully suppress the ninth chapter of Ecclesiastes, great and magnificent literature though it is. If the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong, Tom, Dick, Harry, and Ted will at once ask why they should bother with training or speeding up production.

But let me be more particular. Stevenson writes somewhere of "puling little atheistical poetry books." Let's have a look at your puling little necrophilistic Broadsheets. Take your poem, *Delicate Death Come In*:

Delicate death come in my body is resigned
Sung are the prayers for the dead
Chanted the requiem mass;
Curling corruption take at the roots of my hair
Delicate death come in.

This is obviously an intentional echo of Whitman's

Come lovely and soothing death,
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,
In the day, in the night, to all, to each
Sooner or later delicate death.

But with this difference that whereas your Death is merely a Coty-sprinkled corpse and bit of Beardsleyesque chi-chi, W. W. looks upon Death as a springboard to virile philosophy. As you may not have a Whitman by you let me write out a few lines from *Assurances*:

I do not doubt that the passionately-wept deaths of young men are provided for, and that the deaths of young women and the deaths of little children are provided for,
(Did you think Life was so well provided for, and Death, the purport of all Life, is not well provided for?)
I do not doubt that wrecks at sea, no matter what the horrors of them, no matter whose wife, child, husband, father, lover, has gone down, are provided for, to the minutest points,
I do not doubt that whatever can possibly happen anywhere at any time, is provided for in the inherences of things,
I do not think Life provides for all and for Time and Space, but I believe Heavenly Death provides for all.

Like Whitman, Charles Sprague Hall was concerned not with John Brown's mould'ring body but with the subsequent adventures of his spirit. Your poem suggests a Yellow Book picture of Pierrot before his dressing-table prettifying himself for his paramour. My view is that Death is too much abroad in the world to-day to permit of this powder-puff trifling.

You have certainly produced the Broadshhets beautifully and I enclose cheque for 3s. 6d. as I should like to have them. But inasmuch as I hold the business of our fighting men is to keep Death out, I shall not recommend them. If you tell me that I have misinterpreted your poem, intended to mean that the joy of putting on immortality reconciles you to the horror of putting off mortality, I shall retort that your claim cannot be justified, as the words do not in fact bear such interpretation. In short, that you have bungled the job.

Yours sincerely
JAMES AGATE

129 *Pear Tree Crescent*
Derby

April 17th, 1942

DEAR JAMES AGATE,

The corruption of a critic is the generation of a diarist, perhaps? For you are losing your grip on the one hand, and if you do not retain it on the other what will become of you? "The last of him was heels in air!"

For it seems to me that the critical standpoint behind your letter is wrong, in that you require the artist to go entirely against his nature. The artist doesn't divorce his work from his country's need, or from anything else; he just gets on with it. It is his fortune if that work accords with his country's need, and his country's misfortune, perhaps, if it doesn't. But to suggest that the artist should cast his eye around to see what's wanted before he sets to work is absurd. The artist does the work of which he is capable, not the work he may be called upon to do. You are trying to impose upon him the functions of a hack. "It is the ill-fortune of a strong brain, if not to be dignified as meritorious, to be deprest as dangerous," says Francis Quarles. Will you be another of those who see danger where it is not, and seek to depress it?

You notice a specific poem of mine and appear by implication in criticising this to criticise the whole series of Grasshopper Broadshhets. But the four I sent you contain thirteen poems, a total of 157 lines. You hang your strictures upon but five lines, and those not representative of the temper of the series.

It is easy to be brilliant and superficial, to make a few witty phrases condemn what they do not comprehend. It is not easy to explain away even so small a poem as this one you quote by pointing out a parallel elsewhere, and ending by setting up a silly interpretation as an Aunt Sally to be knocked down.

Such a poem as *Delicate Death Come In* is its own interpretation. What it seeks to express (and you are quite at liberty to say it fails in this) can be expressed exactly in the words of the poem and in no other words. It means what it says, not less, not more. It doesn't mean anything else, and if you don't get out what the author put in he can't help it. I'm not going to alter my poem to suit your ideas, and I don't want you to alter your ideas to suit my poem. It simply appears that I have written a poem which you don't appreciate, and if this is my fault (it may be), it is, perhaps, your loss—but it may be your fault as well, you know.

You attempt to show that this venture of bringing out new poems by a convenient and traditional method has put before subscribers a collection of depressing and derivative stuff which at worst is trifling and puling and at best is "poetry at the wrong time." Well, of course, there is no wrong time for poetry, as you must know.

I answer (and my authority is the elder Samuel Butler) that "there be some that drive a Trade in writing in praise [or dispraise, eh? K. H.] of other Writers (like Rooks, that bet on Gamesters' Hands) not at all to celebrate the learned author's merits, as they would show, but their own wits, of which he is but the subject"—and you have bungled the job.

Yours sincerely

KENNETH HOPKINS

P.S. I never read before either of the passages you quote from Whitman.

10 Fairfax Road, N.W.6

18th April, 1942

DEAR PRIVATE HOPKINS,

Your plea for the artist's right to express himself, if need be to any and everybody's detriment, is based on the gospel beloved of the 'nineties—Art for Art's sake. As a young man I went through this craze and have now come out at the other side. At sixty-four I believe in Art for Man's sake. Dropping the capitals, I believe that art, which began as decoration, can never be more than an interpretation of life—and if you tell me that the interpreter is greater than the man or thing he

interprets, why then I shall believe that the pier-head arranger of Gems from Sullivan is a better man than A. S. himself.

To allow that art can interpret life is much. But suppose that, owing to some *malaise*, the artist's interpretation turns out to be a libel on life? Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal* is one of my favourite libels, but I would not make it the French poetry book for schools. Let me rewrite your *Delicate Death Come In* as John Donne might have written it:

Delicate pox come in my body is resigned
Untasted the draught and the bolus
Turned from the door is the quack;
Pallid worm take my body for playground
Delicate pox come in.

Now swap St Paul's Dean for St Paul himself: "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient." Would you think it expedient to give *Delicate Pox Come In* to medical students who have taken an oath to keep pox out? Many poets in many ages have welcomed death, but I know of none who have woo'd corruption for its own sake. It crosses my mind that if you had called your poem *Acceptance* or *Resignation* or *The Lord is my Shepherd—New Style*, or even *Abide with Me* I should not have protested. But you rely on the poem itself, on the words, on all the words, and nothing but the words, and I hold, rightly or wrongly, that, taken by themselves, without pointer, your words are not such as I think our young men should read at this time.

Now let me glance at another of your thirteen poems—*Lullaby for a Nervous Child*. What effect, if you were not a poet, would you expect the last verse to have on any little girl?

See the pretty lady, how sharp her teeth and white!
As her lips are soft to kiss you so her teeth are fierce
to bite.
Her horse and she are all alone but shadows there are
three,
And the pretty lady's laughing—God help the child and me!

Would you, still not being a poet, croon your little boy to sleep with Schubert's *Erkönig* even if the words are by that undoubted poet Goethe? All through the Broad-sheets I find a slight, subtle but distinct strain of discouragement, and this, to-day, is poison.

To sum up the argument as I see it. I do not want you poets to write Odes in Praise of W.A.A.F.s. I am indifferent as to how many Sonnets to Putrescence you may read to one another. As artists you are beyond my control, and I have

no desire to control you. But you, Private Hopkins, are soldier as well as artist, and in your first letter, written on your regimental note-paper, you reproached me because I had not "squeezed into my reviewing" a word in favour of your Broadsheets. But I write for the *Daily Express*, a paper with an enormous circulation among your fellow-soldiers. Now there are many things I will do. But I will not, in the name of Art, or anything else, add to the boys' nerves, or aid and abet a taste for "curling corruption." I repeat that I hold *Delicate Death Come In* to be authentic poetry of some beauty, though I also think its author would be none the worse for a course of Milton, Blake, Wordsworth, and good old-fashioned Browning. On second thoughts I withdraw this. One can't turn weeping willows into upstanding oaks, and it's a mistake to try. At the same time it is permissible to approve an Army Order to the effect that the planting of weeping willows in parade grounds, barrack squares, and other military purlieus is not recommended.

Yours sincerely,
JAMES AGATE

P.S.—If you are ever this way, Delicate Private Hopkins, Come In.

April 22 A letter :
Wednesday.

10 *Fairfax Road, N.W.6*

21st *April, 1942*

2 A.M. and perfectly sober

DEAR JOCK,

I don't want to join your Beerbohm Club. To do so would be to condone what I regard as the one unpardonable sin—that of wasting a talent. "I have acceded to the hierarchy of good scribes and rather like my niche." Then let Max go on liking it. And let us go on liking him in it.

"Be it cosiness" is not my sort of oriflamme. I am for Ibsen who, after his stroke, set again about his pot-hooks like a child. I am for Whitman, loth, oh ! so loth to lay down his pen ; for Zola, found dead "son nez dans le boudin," as George Moore predicted ; for Leonardo and Goethe and Wagner and Verdi and Wordsworth and Wells and Henry Wood and Shaw—for all who have died or are going to die in harness. Irving and Ellen and Sarah acted until they had no more breath to act with, Monet painted until he could neither see nor hold a brush. Hallé conducted until he could

no longer hold a stick, Pachmann played until his fingers would no longer wag. Exquisiteness does not condone *la faintantise*.

I read every one of Max's articles as they came out in the old *Saturday Review*. I have lived with them ever since. I would give my right hand to possess half that craftsmanship and taste. I shall always pay private tribute to a great little master. But I am still navvying in the road-way and will not leave my ditch to shout for the *flâneur* on the footpath.

Ever

JAMES

P.S. I shall post this first thing in the morning, before I weaken.—J.

April 24 Shocking little revue at the Vaudeville last night.
Friday.

Let reading, writing, 'istry,
J'ography die,
But leave us Ho-di-ho and
Hi-di-hi !

chanted a thirteen-year-old, and the gallery stamped and yelled approval. O for a modern Bacon and a new essay on Radio and the Retardment of Learning ! Then they swung Thomas Nashe's *Spring*—I remember Marie Garcia singing Hentschel's lovely setting in my mother's drawing-room. The swing music was feeble to the point of expiry. *Vienna will Dance Again*. It will, but to its own quick, gay pulse, and not the leaden-footed drone of a suburban *palais de danse* crowd, swaying in sympathy with the mackintoshes steaming on the wall.

April 25 Jean Webster Brough, granddaughter of Lionel
Saturday. Brough, has sent me three letters for my perusal.

One, dated 1818, is from Mrs Siddons and concerns the sale of her house in Southampton. The second is a note from Rachel, undated, thanking some London theatre manager for sending her a box. The third, dated April 5th, 1828, is addressed to Cooper, stage manager at Drury Lane :

DEAR COOPER,

When you so liberally proffered me your assistance the other day I must own for a moment I felt my pulse quicken

by some degrees, and a hectic flush crossed my cheek that indicated a little too much—an ungrateful indignation. The human mind fluctuates with the circumstances that impel it. I have thought upon the subject since with great pleasure, and as you are the first man in the profession that ever tendered me assistance, so are you the first to whom I ever did or would owe an obligation. I have plenty of friends to eat my dinners, drink my wines, laugh at my jokes, and procure money to supply my extravagances—at 300 per cent. interest. But none among all that I have served for the last twelve years have done more for me in the hour of adversity than giving three cheers for my health at the dinner table. This not altogether without interest, for they had an opportunity of hearing themselves or somebody else make a speech. The point of my letter is that I am in tribulation till the bond is out of the hands of the usurers. £200 is still wanting, and the day it becomes due is the very day I open in Edinboro', consequently I shall not be in the receipt of money till the end of the engagement, and such little confidence have I in the forbearance of these vermin that I should expect nothing less than to see my little delightful retreat occupied by Bailiffs on my arrival.

Therefore if you will lend me £250 upon the lawful interest till my return in June to Drury Lane it will be of the most essential service to me, and depend upon it, Cooper, if you should ever want such an accommodation even for ten times the sum (if I possess it) it shall be instantaneously at your command. I shall be in London on Saturday night. If you indulge me let me find it at 206 Regent Street, as I shall want it on Monday morning. Portsmouth is pretty well, but it must be a great many *pretty wells* before I can recover the blow inflicted by whores and aldermen:

Your obliged and sincere friend,

EDMUND KEAN

April 26 Another Brains Trust. At Didcot. Eckersley, Bill *Sunday*. Barrett, Colonel White, Gerald Barry, Walter Legge (question master), Andrade, and Kingsley Martin, a genial, witty, Rabelaisian, non-specious, non-canting fellow wholly unlike the *New Statesman* which he edits. Gerald told us a story of an Irish professor who, having racketted about all his life, was persuaded on his eightieth birthday to let a doctor look him over. The doctor diagnosed gout, rheumatism, gravel, stone, enlarged pancreas, and deteriorated spleen, ending with a

demand for five guineas. "D'ye think, now," said the enraged Professor, "that it's foive guineas I'll be paying to listen to a stream of obscenities the like o' that?" It was at Didcot this afternoon that I first heard the name given by the Army to the psychiatrists now being taken on by the R.A.M.C. The boys call them "trick-cyclists." Which, of course, is what they are.

Stayed at the Randolph at Oxford. It is always good to return to places in which one has been thoroughly miserable. I hated Oxford—the rudest, meanest, sub-normallest hole I have ever struck. I went there with an admiration and expectancy like young Jude's; the only pleasant recollection I have of it is the care taken of me by young Charlie, and the lively companionship with which he beguiled the unutterable and filthy tedium.

April 27 Monday. Marie Tempest about again after her illness, and holding court at the Ivy. When the time comes my old friend will *act* the twenty-third chapter of *Villette*. I remember a commemoration luncheon some ten or twelve years ago after the public had refused to flock to see her in *Mr Pim Passes By*. It was a brilliant performance, but alas, the public passed it by! The point is simply that the familiar is the enemy both of the worse and the better. An actor or actress who makes a real success in a part, and provided that part be not of the grand order, makes that part his or hers for life. No player can monopolise Hamlet: but whoever first plays, say, Aubrey Tanqueray, bags him for good. George Alexander may or may not have been a good actor, but while he lived his was the first and last Mr Tanqueray. The partakers of the funeral baked meats that day were three: Marie Tempest, Graham Browne, and myself. She wept, he wept, and I wept, until the *Caneton à la Mauvaise Presse* was a wet and soggy business. At last one of us spoke, and he said, "My dear Mary, if you were three times better than Irene Vanbrugh you wouldn't be half so good!" Whereupon Mary mopped an eye which had never been really wet, smiled bravely with the other, and said that, after all, everybody *at the beginning of their careers* must expect reverses. She was sixty-five then. The luncheon ended in extreme gaiety.

April 28 Tuesday. Have decided that my favourite picture is Goerg's *Jugement de Paris*. Whenever I see it I think of the final page of *L'Education Sentimentale*, and the establishment of one Zoraïde Turc, known as la Turque. I copy for the sheer pleasure of copying :

Ce lieu de perdition projetait dans tout l'arrondissement un éclat fantastique. On le désignait par des périphrases : " L'endroit que vous savez,—une certaine rue,—au bas des Ponts." Les fermières des alentours en tremblaient pour leurs maris, les bourgeoises le redoutaient pour leurs bonnes, parce que la cuisinière de M. le sous-préfet y avait été surprise ; et c'était, bien entendu, l'obsession secrète de tous les adolescents.

Or, un dimanche, pendant qu'on était aux Vêpres, Frédéric et Deslauriers, s'étant fait préalablement friser, cueillirent des fleurs dans le jardin de Mme Moreau, puis sortirent par la porte des champs, et, après un grand détour dans les vignes, revinrent par la Pêcherie et se glissèrent chez la Turque, en tenant toujours leurs gros bouquets.

Frédéric présenta le sien, comme un amoureux à sa fiancée. Mais la chaleur qu'il faisait, l'appréhension de l'inconnu, une espèce de remords, et jusqu'au plaisir de voir, d'un seul coup d'œil, tant de femmes à sa disposition, l'émurent tellement, qu'il devint très pâle et restait sans avancer, sans rien dire. Toutes riaient, joyeuses de son embarras ; croyant qu'on s'en moquait, il s'enfuit ; et, comme Frédéric avait l'argent, Deslauriers fut bien obligé de le suivre.

On les vit sortir. Cela fit une histoire qui n'était pas oubliée trois ans après. Ils se la contèrent prolixement, chacun complétant les souvenirs de l'autre ; et, quand ils eurent fini :

" C'est là ce que nous avons eu de meilleur ! " dit Frédéric.

" Oui, peut-être bien ? C'est là ce que nous avons eu de meilleur ! " dit Deslauriers.

The owner of the Eye is Zoraïde. The *miché* in the corner is Frédéric grown old.

April 29 Wednesday. *Here's Richness !* published.

May 1 Friday. I am getting on with my collection of what I call (in probably very bad French) *Peintres d'après leurs Sujets*. I began the series with that perfect Renoir, La Trocadera (*Ego* 3, p. 40) and to this I recently added Olympe,

Manet's, of course. I have never seen Olympe walk or stand. She is always sitting, and how she gets into or out of the restaurant where I meet her I shall never know. She is exquisitely pretty against the red plush, and wears a smile which betokens the most dazzling stupidity. She does not talk to the wealthy Hebrew tyrant who accompanies her; perhaps he does not permit it. She seems happy, and has that contented look proper to women who are all their master's harem in one. She is growing a little podgy, and the real-life character she most nearly resembles is Florence St John.

Lunching yesterday at Hammersmith with Leo, I discovered a Toulouse-Lautrec. At first sight the new subject looked as though she might be in the early sixties. Getting used to the subdued lighting, we presently realised that the fantastically bedizened, Skewtonesque old woman was some toast of the 'eighties. "If she were alive to-day," I said, "it might be Letty Lind." "Or Jenny," said Leo. The woman returned stare for stare, and presently Leo went across and said, "I am with a distinguished critic, who feels himself to be in the presence of a distinguished actress." The Toulouse-Lautrec said, "I used to be on the stage, but I have retired. And I wish to remain in my retirement." After which there was nothing for it but to pay our bill and bolt.

Remembering the trouble I got into through refusing to go to Glyndebourne to see the lighting in Verdi's *Macbeth*, I was careful not to repeat the mistake on being asked to inspect the new décor for the same composer's *La Traviata* at the New Theatre. I went last night. I had not been near the old opera since 1905, when I saw it from the gallery of Covent Garden with Melba reeling, writhing, and fainting in coils and Caruso putting a silly little hand on a silly little heart and looking and behaving exactly like Puss in Boots. The thing was made all the more ridiculous by the fact that two hours earlier at Ealing I had seen Sarah Bernhardt give a superb performance of *La Dame aux Camélias*. Even without this I remember thinking Verdi's opera the greatest nonsense I had ever heard. I thought so again last night as I sat and listened to the duet in which Violetta apprises and Alfredo apprehends that Verdi's heroine is going to die, set to an idiotic, tituppy tune with which Rossini wouldn't have lit his cigar.

Leo Pavia tells me that his father, who lived in Venice, was present at the first performance in 1853, and that it was a failure. The tenor had a cold, the baritone didn't like his part, and the prima donna who played the consumptive heroine weighed some eighteen stone. In addition the audience resented the fact that the characters wore contemporary clothes, a thing unheard of in Italian opera at that date. He affirms that at subsequent revivals the costumes were antedated. I cannot remember how Melba was dressed in 1905, but I know that Caruso wore a doublet, long boots reaching to his thighs, and a big soft hat with a long white feather. It was the toggerly plus the mannerisms of the singer which gave Alfredo his striking resemblance to the Marquis de Carabas. The costumes at the New Theatre last night were strictly 1850, and one had only to half-close one's eyes to see the second act balcony as a perfect Renoir. I was particularly entertained by Violetta's bed. This was surrounded by mosquito nets drawn up to and gathered in at the flies, giving the fatal couch the exact appearance of those weird contraptions belonging to the London Power Company at which, during dull intervals in the play, one gazes from the stand on the farther side of Lord's.

May 2 Bagged a Mona Lisa in the Tube to-night.
Saturday. Leonardo's woman, but as she was before he idealised her—plain, frumpish, and with a not at all mysterious permanent scowl.

May 3 The reason why the British race is always wrong in
Sunday. any matter of art and morality is (1) its refusal to believe that the two things are not connected, and (2) its ignorance of arithmetic. In the case of four things taken two at a time, *i.e.* the good and bad woman and the good and bad artist, there are four possible combinations :

- (1) The immoral woman who is also a great artist : Clairon is the type here.
- (2) The immoral woman who is not an actress at all : any drab.
- (3) The moral woman who is a great actress : Mrs Siddons.
- (4) The moral woman whom nothing and nobody can teach to act : Mary Anderson.

But whereas art and morality in the Victorian sense have nothing to do with each other, I find another quality common to so many great actresses that I cannot hold it to be accidental. This is the quality of overweening, ferocious egotism which insists on riding down all competing and therefore all other interests and talents. Sarah Bernhardt possessed it so abundantly that the great Roumanian actor, de Max, could write of her :

“ Il y a deux Sarah—au moins. Il y a celle qu'on voit de la salle. Et il y a celle qu'on voit des coulisses. Le malheur est que, des coulisses, on voit quelquefois la même que dans la salle, la plus belle. C'est un malheur, parce que ces jours-là, on n'est plus maître de soi ; on arrive avec de la haine, de la fureur. On veut se venger d'elle, et puis on devient spectateur en jouant ; quand le rideau se ferme, on lui baise les mains, avec des larmes. . . . Acteur, je connus l'actrice Sarah. Je connus aussi à son Théâtre une petite fille, qui s'appelait, par hasard, Sarah. Ai-je détesté, ai-je aimé cette insupportable petite fille ? Je ne sais plus. C'est si loin. J'ai vieilli. Pas elle. C'est toujours une petite fille, une insupportable petite fille, qui a des caprices, des cris, des crises. Ah ! les crises de cette petite fille ! ”

It is the quality which accounted for the virago in Madge Kendal, and like some great cancer overwhelmed the genius of Mrs Pat. And now comes the point. This is the artistic integrity of these furies. Strip Mrs Pat's mind to the bone, and you came upon ivory. On the stage Madge Kendal was an impeccable artist. Sarah's fastidiousness is now legend.

May 4 Yesterday a Holy Family called, cousins of the nice
Monday. people who look after me. A Family which has taken at least three painters to achieve. The Father, a sprawling giant and driver of an eight-wheel lorry, might have sat for Michael Angelo's David. The Mother has the rapt and slightly sheepish expression of the best Raphaels. The Child, aged two years, has no notion that he is part of a religious painting ; he is just one of those *amours* which frolic all over French eighteenth-century ceilings. There is a fourth figure in the picture. This is the fortnight-old daughter, to display whom was the object of the visit. At present she is a crumpled little bunch of ugliness ; artist not identified.

1942]

EGO 5

May 5 A stranger writes me from an address in Notting Hill
Tuesday. Gate :

Have pity on me ! Or, at least, tell me what to do. I am a poster artist, and three years ago took a studio here on a long lease. Alas, I had reckoned without the people next door. Or rather, one of them—a female with a voice. This she exercises regularly every morning between the hours of eight and nine. The voice is hard, piercing, and charmless. I could support this were it not slightly sharp, at my computation one-sixteenth of a tone, never more and never less. Even this, though I hate all music, I could bear. It is her *répertoire* which has got me down. Here, according to expert information, it is. The Bell Song from *Lakmé*. This is followed by some damned nonsense from *Figaro*. After which *La Bohème*, next *Because*, and finally either *Il Bacio* or the Waltz from Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*. On Sundays the performance begins at ten and includes " Ah, fors' è lui " from *La Traviata*. Three times three hundred and sixty-five are one thousand and ninety-five. Please appreciate, Mr Agate, that I have had to listen to these shocking sounds one thousand and ninety-five times, except the Verdi, which I have had to endure only one hundred and fifty-six times. Even the war gives no prospect of release. I am still something of a cripple from the last one, and the young woman is in a Government Office. It is said that one can get used to most things, and I had become more or less inured. But a worse thing has happened. This is that on two or three days a week the young woman has started evening practice. As I never know which evening she is going to choose I suffer as, you doubtless remember, De Quincey suffered. " A peacock had come to live within hearing distance from him, and not only the terrific yells of the accursed biped pierced him to the soul, but the continued terror of their recurrence kept his nerves in agonising tension during the intervals of silence." I understand you are fond of music. *Will you change houses with me ?*

May 6 Letter from Ernest Helme :
Wednesday.

Hillend
Llangennith
Swansea

May 5, '42

DEAR JAMES,

Twice through have I read and revelled in *Here's Richness !*. As I always do with books that are going to be my friends, I

have made annotations for my own satisfaction. I am venturing to send them to you ; not that I think you will have the time, or even the inclination, to cast that stern yet twinkling eye on my presumption. I have drawn attention to one or two quibbling, trifling errors, though perhaps they are not errors ; I hope they are, as they induce me to put you and Anton Rubinstein on a level. Giants need not—should not—worry over petty details : further, I hold that such peccadilloes encourage sympathy, and after all the immaculate is not really human.

Your most affect. friend

ERNEST HELME

Here are some of the annotations :

Rivals. Pasta, a dramatic soprano with an organ of dynamic power but probably not a highly finished singer, as like Tamagno she was inclined to sing sharp at the commencement of an opera : on the other hand Malibran was an exquisitely finished singer with a luscious mezzo-contralto of amazing range and flexibility, probably more fascinating than powerful ; she and Pasta did not shine in the same rôles, and Malibran would have sung Arsace to Pasta's Semiramide if they had ever appeared together. For which reason I query "rivals."

Madge Kendal's "Edwardian" Bonnet. No, Victorian. You would have had a trouncing : that bonnet was meticulously modelled on that adopted by the Old Queen on all except State occasions.

Stella Patrick Campbell. I always preferred her in comedy ; to me her pathos became bathos. But then I am prejudiced against bent backs. Sarah Bernhardt said to my aunt once, when discussing Mrs Pat : "Une vraie comédienne, mais sa tragédie manque de fond, de force."

Frank Benson. Bravo, James, for fair play to that fine actor—the best Charles Surface, Orlando, Richard II, and Hamlet I recollect. Benson's voice even when young was slightly harsh, but always incisively distinct. His voice lacked subtlety for a reason of which you may not be aware. When young and at my old school, Winchester, Benson, fine and keen athlete, shouted, "Houses," regardless of strain to his chords, I expect, as we all did. I remember him asking me at Durban somewhere in 1922 what had happened to my singing voice since the inevitable break, and I replied that it had never recovered from the liberties I had taken with it watching "sixes," and he instantly averred, "Nor did mine."

Marie Lloyd. "She had genius." Yes, James, and she had a not generally recognised pathos. I shall never forget her farewell speech at Norwich to our S. Wales Mounted Brigade on the eve of our departure overseas during the last war. I can still see that dumpy little Cockney in the enormous hat and short dress; there were not many dry eyes after she had said: "Now, Boys, I know you will all remember your girls and write to them. And I, Marie Lloyd, beg and pray you to remember your mothers, to whom you are more than anything else in all the world." The tone with which she inflected those words could only have been created by a very great artist.

May 7 Thursday. Was hoping yesterday evening to get to the Albert Hall to hear Moiseiwitsch make one bite of those three cherries, Beethoven's Third, Fourth, and Fifth Concertos. Then a frantic telephone message came from Aldershot saying that Darlington had collapsed in the office of the *Telegraph*, and would I drop everything, jump into a taxi, catch the next train, and be the adjudicator at a dramatic festival for troops and others? To do this not only yesterday but also to-day. A *corvée* of course, but not without its comic side. It is not given to every dramatic critic to sup with King Lear and be driven home by Cordelia.

May 8 Friday. I am getting tired of the dithyrambing about Scott-Moncrieff's translation of Proust. The thing of which S.-M. made a first-class job was, after all, feasible, since in all countries intellectuals speak more or less the same language. Paul Bourget, had he known English well enough, would have made a perfect job of translating his cloudy compeer, Henry James. I understand that Proust spoke English perfectly. If this is so, and had he been alive and so disposed, he could have made an admirable job of translating Charles Morgan. "Hypostase" is perfectly good French for "hypostasis," and I have no doubt that Charles's opposite number would have found some mannered French equivalent for "perdurable." The difficulty starts with the *argot* of the lower classes, a good test sentence being one which occurs in Charlie Pond's *The Fully Licensed Man*—"I never see'd a man lean up against a bar so pretty in all my life." I doubt whether the whole of Proust contains any passage as difficult as this single sentence of Mrs Maisie Madigan's

in Sean O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock* : " As far as I can see, the Polis as Polis, in this city, is Null an' Void ! "

Picking up the French translation of *Pickwick* this afternoon, I looked to see how the translator had dealt with Jingle. Perhaps the best way would be to put two passages in parallel columns :

" Never mind," said the stranger, cutting the address very short, " said enough,—no more ; smart chap that cabman—handled his fives well ; but if I'd been your friend in the green jemmy—damn me—punch his head,—'cod I would,—pig's whisper—pieman too,—no gammon."

— N'en parlons plus, dit l'étranger, coupant court aux compliments, ça suffit. Fam-eux gaillard, ce cocher, il jouait bien des poings, mais si j'avais été votre ami à l'habit de chasse vert, Dieu me damne ! j'aurais brisé la tête du cocher en moins de rien ; celle du pâtissier aussi, parole d'honneur !

There are more translator's headaches in " 'cod I would," etc., than in the whole of Proust.

May 9 When the bombing started I sent a duplicate of
Saturday. the Diary to my brother Harry at York. And this has been the procedure with every entry from that date onwards. Naturally a lot of dead wood has had to be cut away. And without a word of complaint from Harry until this morning, when I receive what must be the mildest protest ever.

When you get really hard up I am sure that de la Rue's will be only too pleased to offer you a job as 'games inventor.' Here's a recipe for one to be called " Diary."

Think of an entry
Emend it
Add five subsidiary pages
Take away three
Substitute two others
Insert an Intaglio

Take away the entry you first thought of and **DELETE THE WHOLE.** This is a grand game !

May 10 Sunday. Brains Trust at Felixstowe. Followed by the worst wind-cum-nerves attack I have had for years, beginning in the train at eight o'clock and lasting till three in the morning. The old stuff all over again, only more of it. I lie in bed and imagine that my arms and legs have become detached, and that I cannot put the complete body together again. Next I am the central figure in Grünewald's altar-piece, *Temptation of St Anthony*. From this—"of sorriest fancies my companions making"—I proceed to De Quincey's essay on *The Last Days of Kant*, except that that old gentleman's "shocking and indescribable phantasmata" came to him in sleep while mine happen while I am wide awake. Soon after three o'clock a friendly bout of asthma came along, friendly because normal and therefore to be coped with. While coping with it I fell asleep.

May 11 Monday. Better this morning and able to realise that Poe, Grünewald, and De Quincey spell gooseberry pie.

May 12 Tuesday. George Harrap tells me that *Here's Richness!* was sold out prior to publication, and that he has put a new impression in hand. Letter from Meric Dobson saying that after schooling and probation he is now an officer and hopes presently to be a gentleman.

May 18 Wednesday. Discover this morning that Larousse gives *Mon-sieur et Madame Cardinal* as the title of Halévy's little book, the whole point being the order of the names: *Madame et Monsieur Cardinal*. This gives a jog to one of my plaguy neuroses, one which would be quite overwhelming but for the knowledge that I share it with at least one other person. A well-known playwright once confessed to me that he had suffered all his life from the conviction that he would not live to finish the particular act on which he was engaged. He has endured this throughout thirty years and the same number of plays, all successfully terminated. It isn't as though he said to himself, "This will certainly happen one day," which would be a reasonable though foolish fear; we have all got to stop writing

some day. But I know he has planned twenty years of retirement—before the war it was to be Lake Maggiore, the talk now is of Windermere. The point about all neuroses is that they are unreasonable. *Ego 5* will be my thirty-sixth book. Thirty-six times I have felt that an attack of sleeping-sickness will happen to prevent me from correcting the proofs. A million cats on a million hot bricks are a poor picture of my impatience this morning when the second post brought the first half-dozen galleys of *Ego 5*. Am I simultaneously writing the last pages of this diary and correcting the first? Yes. Six galleys are roughly eighteen pages, which means that for three weeks—allowing for Sundays almost a month—I shall be on tenterhooks. I lie awake at night imagining that somebody else has been correcting the proofs with frightful accidents to my French. Damn Larousse!

May 14 Alan Dent's *Preludes and Studies*—I feel I ought to
Thursday. give up calling him "Jock"—is receiving wonderful notices in the Press. I am glad to think that my notice in *John o' London's Weekly* was first in the field. "There are still people who do not know the correct use of the knife and fork. There may still be a few educated people who are unaware of Mr Alan Dent, of his exquisite mind and continual wit." But I regret to find on looking at the notice again that it lapses into some rather pernicky fault-finding. How this happened is obvious to me, and it probably means that I ought never to review anything by Jock. The point is that I wish him too well, and consequently fall into the trap of demanding that he shall do better now than he did fifteen years ago; what I fail to realise is that nobody except me knows how well Jock did fifteen years ago. I turn up my first *Ego* and I find him at nineteen writing of Sibelius: "I feel that this great music soars above the aspiring programme. Not only have we frozen heights, the glitter, glitter, the keen ringing loneliness of icebergs, the windy silences, the snow, but the mind is sent into the immensities—to stars, to the dark thoughts of great whales, to the mystery of joy, to the dreamy gloom of death." And here am I insisting that the man shall perform better than the boy. I am an old fool!

1942]

EGO 5

May 15 Letter from Osbert Sitwell :
Friday.

Renishaw Hall
Renishaw, nr. Sheffield

May 14, '42

MY DEAR AGATE,

I've been re-reading *Here's Richness* ! with increased appreciation, and feel so pleased to have had a share in it, or at any rate in presenting it to the public—I am its god father, amn't I ?

Your Death Masks are new to me, and impressive and moving. How fine a lapidarist you are ! I do not know whether I prefer the masks of those I never saw, or of those whom I saw and knew. Only twice in my life did I see Sarah, when she was a very old woman, but your account of her makes her unforgettable voice, hoarse as it was golden, sound for me again among the banal tricks and baroque fantasies of the music-hall . . . or there is Mrs Aria, a dear friend of mine as of yours, with her collection of writers and actors and editors and spiritualist clergymen, all animated by her quietness and her wit . . . or Harry Tate, whose moustache, as I read you, seems to flash again upon the lime-lit air laden with raucous laughter . . . or Marie Lloyd . . . I expect there is little to tell you of her that you did not know—but *did* you know that as a girl of about sixteen, with lovely red hair, she sat to D. G. Rossetti ?—so Robert Ross told me, and added that he went to see her, and said to her in an awed voice, "So *you* knew Rossetti . . . do you remember him well ?" And Marie Lloyd replied, "Of *course* I remember him . . . I've often wondered what happened to the young chap afterwards. . . ."

Yours ever,

OSBERT SITWELL

To which I replied :

10 Fairfax Road, N.W.6

May 15, 1942

MY DEAR SITWELL,

Your letter came at exactly the right time, and it was exactly the right letter. I had just read some young woman's review in which she compared me to one of those grotesque figures stumping the streets playing half a dozen instruments at once with a drum and cymbals worked by the feet. Just as I was smarting under the uncanny but, I hold, half-seeing perception of this, and wondering how I can persuade the public that *inside* I am as shy as Robert Lynd looks outside—you came along with praise of my "lapidary" style. Which was

just what I needed. The Marie Lloyd story is lovely—and so like her. The bookie's "A heart the size of Waterloo Station" is still her best epitaph!

And now I suggest that you let your pen revert to its normal use, or I shall begin to think that in writing to and about me you have happened on your true vocation. And I am not so great an egoist as to "wish that you might ever do nothing but that," as Florizel so charmingly puts it. I would still have you write about that "wave o' the sea" which is Newborough.

I hold "Low Tide" to be very nearly the best short story in the language. If I were editing an Anthology of People Other Than Me, one of my first choices would be the Church Parade of the Misses Cantrell-Cooksey, beginning at "Clasping a black-bound Prayer Book," and ending "for the skull was already asserting its lordship over the flesh." (J. A. is a mighty fine fellow, but he cannot write like O. S.) By the way, did I ever tell you about sending my houseboy into my study for this story, which I told him he would find lying on the desk. He came back and said: "I can't find nothing about a tide; what's on the desk is called Triple Fudge." As a lover of fudge, can I desire anything better than triple extract of it?

Now I do tremendously want you to understand something and value it 100 per cent. I haven't 100 per cent. of back-scratching in my make-up. I think you are a superb writer. I get pleasure from the shape of your sentences in the way the other sex gets pleasure from the lines of a gown by Hartnell or Molyneux. My prose, on the other hand, is like a frock run up by "the clever little woman round the corner." And that's why I asked you to write the Preface.

Wire me when next you are coming to town. I know something of the private life of a certain *maître d'hôtel*, and can probably blackmail him to the extent of a chop.

Ever,

JAMES AGATE

May 16 And now this from G. B. Stern :
Saturday.

*Hubert's Cottage
Aston Tirrold
Near Didcot
Berks*

May 15, '42

DEAR JAMES AGATE,

I've had a lovely time with *Here's Richness*!, being just the sort of collection that suits my temperament, such as it is.

And what an appropriate quotation from Ruskin. As I always find, I have to list everything in order of personal preference—(You do the same, I believe. The hardest is over the six novels of Jane Austen)—this is the way it goes :

Death Masks.

Gallimaufry. (I had to look up the meaning of this word ; now I'll be using it *too* much.)

From My Wireless Talks.

My American Journey. (No, that ought to have come higher.)

Southend and Ostend.

Audience with Rubicon. (And then the rest.)

Perhaps you will let me babble a little of these, when (D.V.) I return to London in October ? Perhaps you will lunch with me for five bob or What You Will ?

Part of the object of this letter is to include a message to Alan Dent, expressing my enjoyment of *Preludes and Studies*, and my black rage at being excluded, for no good reason at all, from the Maximilians. Please tell him how gladly I opened my last bottle of Steinberg Cabinet 1921, when Max came to dine with me in Albany in 1935 ; and how I remember him afterwards rolling on the carpet in some mysterious but entrancing gymnastics to illustrate an anecdote which I'm ashamed to have forgotten ; and how I could supply endless stories of his wit and wickedness and charm and savour and profound goodness and sedate irony. And how he has a passion for turtle soup, to which I'm proud to say he compared my Matriarch chronicles in a letter which has left me permanently arrogant. I still have that letter ; it happened by sheer luck to be with me in hospital when my rooms in Albany were reduced to ashes. I shall read it, in a spirit of ironic detachment (I hope), while you are feasting the writer.

I hear rumours that you haven't been too well lately. I hope it isn't serious ? Illness is such a bloody waste of time. . . . Of *good* time, when it's yours. I agree warmly with Osbert, though I could not have phrased it so well.

Yours very sincerely,
G. B. STERN

A pity this G. B. S. didn't marry the other one ! The Jewish brain proving the female to the Irish soul, they must have begot what Shakespeare's Richard called " a generation of still-breed ing thoughts." However, the time is not yet when one can mate people because of their cerebral affinity.

Now for my reply :

10 *Fairfax Road, N.W.* 6

May 16th, 1942

DEAR G. B. STERN,

But what a lovely letter !

I'm not sure about Death Masks being the best. They are done, if I may say so, with professional competence, but after all, the material was there. The same, too, with Gallimaufry. By the way, your saying you didn't know the word takes me aback. Of course you knew it ; it was just lying *perdu* in your memory. Clifford Bax would be very cross with you if he thought you had really forgotten the scene in his beloved *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* in which Soranzo (lovely name) enters " unbraced, and dragging in Annabella."

Sor. Come, strumpet, famous whore ! were every drop
Of blood that runs in thy adulterous veins
A life, this sword (dost see't ?) should in one blow
Confound them all. Harlot, rare, notable harlot,
That with thy brazen face maintain'st thy sin,
Was there no man in Parma to be bawd
To your loose cunning whoredom else but I ?
Must your hot itch and pleurisy of lust,
The heyday of your luxury, be fed
Up to a surfeit, and could none but I
Be pick'd out to be cloak to your close tricks,
Your belly-sports ?—Now I must be the dad
To all that *gallimaufry* that is stuff'd
In thy corrupted bastard-bearing womb !—
Why, must I ?

To descend from the sublime to the aspiring, I think My American Journey is my best thing. It has a freshness which I had in *L. of C.* and lost throughout the next quarter of a century. Southend and Ostend is just vulgar, but I included it because I am partly vulgar. As everybody has seen, but only Lady Oxford proclaimed.

I am glad that you appreciated the quotation from Ruskin. That makes it worth while, for I was willing to bet that it would pass unnoticed. Leo Pavia, whom I should like to bring with me when I come to lunch—expense no object—tells me this morning that part of this quotation was appended by Elgar to the score of *Gerontius*.

About the Maximilians I understand that no women are to be included. Rightly or wrongly, I have refused to belong. You see, Max took his hand from the plough, and that is the one thing in an artist I cannot forgive. I loathe inaction. I work till I drop, I never remember resting, and with me going

to bed at night is literally "the death of each day's life." What worries me when I am ill is not dying but the idea of ceasing to work. Dr Johnson said, "An odd thought strikes me : we shall receive no letters in the grave." An odd thought strikes me : we shall keep no diaries. However, I did not set out to write a gloomy letter, and the best way to deal with illness is not to think about it. Which of course is a counsel of perfection. Therefore I will admit that I haven't been quite up to the mark recently, though I am convinced it was only indigestion. If I were Charles Morgan the form it would take would be that of Hippas Feverel's aristocratic dyspepsia. As it is, I am inclined to Mr Polly's sort. Every man of forty—and *a fortiori* of sixty-four—should be his own doctor. And my inner medical man prescribes for me a good lunch with you, beginning with Max's turtle soup. But must I really wait until October ?

Yours sincerely,
JAMES AGATE

May 17 Sunday. Compèred a concert at Henley this afternoon and had a bit of a collapse afterwards.

May 25 Monday. The doctor, frowning on the idea of Macbeth's Witches dancing round my bed which has suddenly become cauldron, and of me holding parley with hags and monsters who are not there, diagnoses overwork and threatens a nursing home. Compromise by proposing to turn the Villa Volpone into a reasonable imitation of one. Here is my régime : Regular meals, gentle exercise—like Millamant I nauseate walking—early bed, no cigars, and not more whisky than would sustain a fly. Also to lay off all work.

May 30 Saturday. The régime isn't working, because I am ! It's all very well for Brother Harry to write, "Go window-shopping. Inspect Woolworth's minutely. Visit the Zoo. Study fish. Buy a book on insect life." *I just can't do nothing*, and during the last week have put in eight to ten hours a day proof-correcting. Try going to Lord's, the dentist, Lord's again, but always come back to my desk. As this isn't fair to my papers which have given me a holiday and think I am twiddling my thumbs, I have decided to go to Bournemouth for

a week with George Mathew, whose holiday falls opportunely. Leo is to examine correspondence and forward all of it that isn't worrying.

May 31 Sunday. Opening my paper in the train to Bournemouth, I read that John Barrymore has died. Oddly enough, among the books I have brought down with me is a review copy of Mrs Alma Power-Waters's biography published this week. "For God's sake don't whitewash me," Barrymore said to her. "Play me as I am." This would seem to be a favourite gambit with players. Rachel wrote in one of her last letters: "Si les faiseurs de chroniques scandaleuses s'avisent un jour de reproduire ma vie, contez-la dans toute sa simplicité." Well, it's an old argument. I turn up the travelling companion who never leaves me, and I read: JOHNSON: "Sir, the question is, whether a man's vices should be mentioned; for instance, whether it should be mentioned that Addison and Parnell drank too freely: for people will probably more easily indulge in drinking from knowing this; so that more ill may be done by the example, than good by telling the whole truth." Boswell collated this with another observation made on the same subject when Lord Hailes and Johnson "sat one morning calmly conversing in my house at Edinburgh." On this occasion Johnson said, "If a man is to write *A Panegyrick*, he may keep vices out of sight; but if he professes to write *A Life* he must represent it really as it was." And when Boswell objected to the danger of telling that Parnell drank to excess, Johnson said, "It would produce an instructive caution to avoid drinking, when it was seen, that even the learning and genius of Parnell could be debased by it."

I hold that whoever said, "There's nothing so tragic as a man of genius who is not also a man of honour," went off the rails badly. Like complaining that a fiddler should be colour-blind. The tragic thing is when a man of genius throws his genius away. Brooks Atkinson, the New York critic, in a Foreword to Mrs Power-Waters's book, finds excuses for Barrymore. He is describing the reappearance of the actor at the Belasco Theatre the year before last: "Barrymore made his entrance in a raffish fur coat—ravaged and jaunty, weary and sardonic, ill and sprightly. I was shocked by what seventeen years of

revelry had done to the greatest romantic actor we have ever had. And in spite of his *savoir-faire* I imagined that he was a little terrified by the coarse voracity of the audience. But blood and genius will tell, if they are genuine ; and as the evening wore on there was no doubt that we had an actor before us. Despite the morbid expectations of the audience, it was soon clear that Mr Barrymore was no broken-down hack, asking forgiveness for a prodigal existence. He was not penniless or remorseful. He was a wit in his own right and he could laugh at himself or the play without condescending. From the point of view of art it is a pity that his gifts have been so lightly squandered. But from the point of view of a human being, I think it is exhilarating to see a man with an ironic and candid mind taking things as they come and sharpening the realities with a wisecrack." I only half agree. In my view a man of genius should hold his genius as precious as his life. I can never forgive Kean for dying at the age of forty-six. Barrymore could have been as great an actor as Talma, and was not.

June 1 Some people rate hotels by the food, others by the
Monday. beds. I go entirely by the working facilities. From
 this angle the best hotel I know is my old friend, the
Palace at Southend, where, since both visitors and natives are illiterate, you have an immense room to yourself. Second-best is the Royal Pavilion at Folkestone, where the desk is bigger, but where people have been known to indite postcards. The hotel here would be a good third, were it not for the deplorable manners of the visitors, who have no notion of shutting the door leading on to the extremely pleasant verandah. I can see that I shall have to get up from my desk to do this fifty times a day.

Lunch at Branksome Tower Hotel, and spend the afternoon among the pine-trees reading a silly little book, picked up for sixpence, entitled *La Vie et les Amours Tourmentées de Sacher-Masoch*. Actually I was re-living two other visits to this hotel. It was here that I stayed for the National Show of 1988, when Black Tulip made her first appearance in good company and I didn't close an eye for two nights. She was third. On the second occasion, in 1985, I slept like a log, and next day, again at the National, Ego beat her great opponent, Nanette, for the first and only time. In the evening with George Richards to hear

Nina Milkina and the Wessex Orchestra tackle Mozart's D Minor piano concerto, after which we discover good food and service at the Royal Bath. Bed by twelve.

June 2 Tuesday. Wearily I ask once again—why will writers meddle with matters of which they know nothing? Review copies pursuing me here, I open at random Emil Ludwig's *The Germans*, and read that Wagner, "apart from the preludes and the *Siegfried Idyll*, never produced a piece of genuine, that is to say, wordless music." What about the *Faust* Overture, the *Huldigungsmarsch*, *Kaisermarsch*, the piano pieces, and the re-arranged ending to the overture to Gluck's *Iphigénie en Aulide*?

Also in the parcel was Virginia Woolf's *Death of the Moth*, which shows that a writer may be great without possessing one vestige of humour. V. W. confesses that whenever she rode in a London bus she always sat near the conductor and tried to enter into his thoughts. Whereupon, I suppose, the conversation went as follows:

"How old is this bus, my friend?" inquired Mrs Woolf, rubbing her nose with the shilling she had reserved for the fare.

"Forty-two," replied the conductor, eyeing her askant.

"What!" ejaculated Mrs Woolf, laying her hand upon her notebook. The conductor reiterated his former statement. Mrs Woolf looked very hard at the man's face, but his features were immovable, so she noted down the fact forthwith.

"And how long do you keep the bus out at a time?" inquired Mrs Woolf, searching for further information.

"Two or three weeks," replied the man.

"Weeks!" said Mrs Woolf in astonishment—and out came the book again.

And so on and so forth, as set out in the second chapter of *Pickwick*.

Also included was Mr Joseph Lewis's *Conducting without Fears*. Some people talk as though the conductor were three parts of the modern orchestra. The truth about your conductor is the following: (1) He must be musically minded. (2) He must have extensive knowledge of music. (3) He should have a working knowledge of every instrument in the orchestra. (4) He

should have those personal qualities which bind men to their leader in any walk of life. A conductor with these qualities is good enough for the wireless. To be a success with a public which can see him, a conductor must have something of the quality of a great actor. And that's all there is to be said about conductors. Except that give me twenty-four hours, and I will pull Moiseiwitsch and the Philharmonic Orchestra through the Rachmaninoff Concerto, whereas no conductor and no orchestra will ever pull me through it.

June 3 John Gielgud, who is giving the natives a taste of *Wednesday*. his *Macbeth*, turned up. Also Charles Smith, who is running the *George and Margaret* Company here. We collected George Mathew and had a little party in my room—if I can't drink whisky I can make pretence with a syphon. John delighted me by letting out what really happens when distinguished players produce plays over the heads of Ivor Brown's factory hands and miners. How, at some camp where he was playing *Dear Brutus*, the Canadians marched out in a body, one of them being heard to say, "Jesus, they're crackers!" He showed me an interesting collection of things written about the *Macbeths* of Garrick, Kean, Kemble, Macready, Booth, Rossi, Irving. I was looking through this when the sirens went. They were raiding Poole across the water, and after watching it for half an hour from the balcony we resumed our talk and didn't break up till the All Clear about 4 A.M.

June 4 Mark Hambourg came down to play. The old boy *Thursday*. was in grand fettle, and at lunch told us a strictly non-Maeterlinckian story about a zoological friend of his who has succeeded in breeding an entirely blue bird, and now can't sleep for thinking of the amount of feathered incest that has been necessary. Afterwards to the Pavilion, where Mark gave a grand and Beethovenish performance of the C minor piano concerto. Mark tells me that Beethoven wrote on the MS. "Not for women." He certainly gives the last movement its proper Flemish character, a whole countryside away from the weak Mozartian charm with which women pianists invest it.

June 5 From a review of *Here's Richness!* in a publication
Friday. called *Shell Magazine* :

If provocativeness in a writer is a sign of talent, then Mr James Agate is as gifted as he gives the impression of thinking himself to be, for I know of no modern essayist, critic, and journalist who is capable of affording so much annoyance to so many by the expression of so few really significant thoughts.

That's Shell, that was !

June 6 John was anxious, even insistent, that I should not
Saturday. write in the *S.T.* about last night's performance, on the ground that he is tired, the cast has had casualties, and the production is about to go into dry-dock prior to London. I promised, telling him that *I* was tired, but with a mental reservation about *Ego*. And so behaved exactly like the Witches "That keep the word of promise to our ear, And break it to our hope!" John will never be happy vocally with Macbeth; his voice is neither deep enough nor resonant enough. But what sheer acting ability can do, he does. His is the only Macbeth I have ever seen who has kept it up all the way through; the last act, where most of them fall down, is superb. In the lounge before lunch Gwen sought to show by metaphysical X, Y, and Z that Lady Macbeth is a frail little thing, all nervous energy and no physique. Lady M. can't contemplate a murder without taking something to steady her nerves. ("That which hath made them drunk hath made me bold.") She can't carry one through and has to invent an excuse. ("Had he not resembled my father as he slept, I had done 't.") She is given to fainting and sleep-walking, and cracks up in the end. "All very persuasive, and I don't believe a word of it. I don't and won't see Lady M. as a kind of Rosa Dartle. If I can't have Mrs Siddons give me Mrs Vincent Crummles. The vast Pavilion was crowded. Many were service men, some of whom had to leave before the end. It was still bright day, and each time a soldier crept out, the golden sunlight peeped through the blanket of the dark.

June 8 Back from Bournemouth, and glad to be. An
Monday. enervating hole. Did six hours' work every day. All the same I am probably better. Find awaiting me this letter from George Richards :

*Blenheim
Mount Pleasant Road
Poole*

June 7, '42

DEAR JOVE (whose brow o'ertops the highest cloud),

It is quite unnecessary for me to say what nevertheless I decline not to say, namely that your visit made last week a peak of enjoyment in the monotony of war-time provincial life as lived by a nobody. The pleasure and enjoyment was enhanced in no mean degree by your having conferred on me the acquaintance of your friend George Mathew, whose personality endears itself as well by a lambent, unintermittent wit as by a certain soothing quality of melliferous equanimity which, I surmise, makes his company the perfect foil and setting for that volcanic complex of diabolic-delicious combativeness which constitutes the phenomenon popularly designated as James Agate. May your tomsday coincide as nearly as possible with doomsday. But if I am ever called upon to provide you with an epitaph I shall perform the task in two words of adapted Horace: *SPLENDIDE PUGNAX*. Meanwhile the general feeling on your departure is best summarised in Macbeth's :

All is but toys : renown and grace is dead ;
The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees
Is left this vault to brag of.

However that may or may not be, I hope you had a real holiday. For myself I am much better for your visit. This morning the only thing I have to contend with is a morbid diathesis consisting of a touch of uræmic convulsions due to degenerate processes in the tubular epithelium with meso-blastic complications.

* Yours ever,
GEORGE RICHARDS

G. R. writes as Stevenson tells us Cockshot talked : "Cockshot is bottled effervescency, the sworn foe of sleep. Three-in-the-morning Cockshot, says a victim. His talk is like the driest of all imaginable champagnes. Sleight of hand and inimitable quickness are the qualities by which he lives." But I don't endorse "victim," and I reject "*His choice of words is not much.*" (Italics mine.) I would rather say that G. R.'s choice of words is too much. This entertaining rattle uses all the words there are, all the time.

June 20 Saturday. Jock said, "Your Leo's a failure. Nobody will believe in him. He doesn't add up." In the novelist's sense of course my old friend doesn't add up. When I went away his instructions were to examine my correspondence and forward whatever was non-worrying. The result was two obvious business envelopes—the one containing a demand from the Revenue for the immediate payment of £1666; the other a request for fourteen shillings for milk alleged to have been consumed by me at Bognor in 1940. When I got back I found a huge pile which would have made pleasant reading. "I thought I'd save them for you," said Leo, with the look of a child expecting a penny.

June 23 Tuesday. When I had finished re-reading for the tenth time Damon Runyon's story, *Madame La Gimp*, my eye travelled along my bookshelves till it came to Besant and Rice's *The Golden Butterfly*. Dave the Dude's party included Mister O. O. McIntyre, Mister Willic K. Vanderbilt, Mister Al Jolson, Mister Otto H. Kahn, Mister Herbert Bayard Swope, Mister William Muldoon, the Vice-President of the United States, the Honourable Police Commissioner, Sophie Tucker, Theda Bara, and Jeanne Eagels. Besant and Rice did better, having as guests at Gilead P. Beck's dinner-party Thomas Carlyle, Alfred Tennyson, John Ruskin, Algernon Swinburne, George Augustus Sala, Charles Darwin, Professor Huxley, and Frederick Leighton. The undergraduates talk good mock-Carlyle: "Beautiful the meanest thing that works; even the rusty and unmusical Meat-jack. All else belongs to the outlook of him whom men called Beelzebub. The brief Day passes with its poor paper crowns in tinsel gilt; Night is at hand with her silences and her veracities." And, when the author of *The Crown of Wild Olive* addresses the American millionaire, not bad spoof-Ruskin: "I welcome one of my fellow-workers from the other side of the Atlantic. I cannot utter to you what I would. We see all too dimly as yet what are our great world-duties, for we try and outline their enlarging shadows. You in America do not seek peace as Menahem sought it, when he gave the King of Assyria a thousand pieces of silver. . . ." These old Victorians were great fun.

1942]

EGO 5

June 24 Letter from my unknown friend, Private Irvine :
Wednesday.

The last time I heard from you was in Lambourn, in Berkshire. I have since heard that another volume of *Ego* is to come out in 1942. Has it appeared yet? I doubt whether I will see it now, as this letter comes to you from the briny ocean; we are being escorted far out to sea, travelling from England's fair shores to death and glory. Still as Shakespeare said in a stoical moment, "Men must endure their going hence, even as their coming hither. Ripeness is all." And, by Golly, if I'm not ripe, after two years in the Army, and — weeks at sea, then no one ever will be!

It was in Lambourn, you may remember, that you were so kind as to help replace my kit-bag library, and you will no doubt be pleased to know that in my trip across the world I have brought with me your copy of Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*. I shall carry it wherever I may land—whether it be desert or jungle, whether it be Burma Road or the Old Kent Road. Amid the shot and shell, tanks and Tommy guns, Chinese and cheetahs, Arabs and Ack-Ack, I shall dip into Palgrave and find me a jewel of consolation.

May your pen never run dry!

JOHNNIE IRVINE (Pte.)

June 26 Nobody can say of me that I am not, in intention,
Friday. scrupulously fair. For months I have thought that Ivor Brown was unconsciously deceiving himself and his *Observer* readers with his glowing tales of how Lancashire weavers welcome Sybil's *Medea*, and Yorkshire miners open their arms to *The Trojan Women*. My view was confirmed by John Gielgud's account of the Canadians' reception of *Dear Brutus*. This morning I receive the following letter addressed to me care of the *Express*.

Burnley

June 24, '42

MR JAMES AGATE

DEAR SIR,

This is an anonymous letter, because I am too ashamed to sign my name after living nearly fifty years in complete ignorance of the beauties of Shakespeare's works through sheer pigheadedness; I wish to thank you for opening my eyes. After reading your articles lately in which you quoted

Shakespeare, I asked my wife if she would like to see a Shakespeare play and to my surprise (then) she said, "Yes!" As you undoubtedly know, we have the Old Vic players with Sadler's Wells Singers and Ballet stationed in Burnley, and the former last week and this have produced *Othello* and the *Merry Wives of Windsor*. On Thursday my wife and I went to see *Othello* and never before in my life have I been so moved. What a lot I've missed, but you can stake your life I am going to make up for it in the future. To-night we are going to see the *Merry Wives of Windsor*.

Othello—I can close my eyes now (in the midst of whirring machinery) and see and hear the agony of the Moor and the perfidy of Iago, the rat. Highbrow? Then life is highbrow. Haven't we the same tragedies happening to-day—tittle-tattling neighbours watching soldiers' wives, etc., until he comes home hearing half-truths which fill him with doubt, and the next the world knows is a paragraph in the Press announcing another tragedy. God! what swine some of us are, I sincerely hope and pray that my tongue will rot and drop out before it does a wrong like that. I must not take up your time and bore you, and I am looking forward to to-night. Again thanking you.

Yours sincerely,

A. S. C. (a Shakespeare convert)

My first reaction to this is that my correspondent is the exception which proves my case, not Ivor's. My second reaction is that it would be wiser to suspend judgment till I can find time to go and see for myself.

June 27 From Jock :
Saturday.

Saturday morn

DEAR JAMIE,

Moi qui te parle aired my views on Ibsen hier soir on the radio. My début there, sir, and I haven't felt so scared since they wheeled me into the operating-theatre to cut out my appendix. I wish now I had told my friends (people like yourself) that I was doing it, since the B.B.C. tells me I did it well—and *dramatically*. I was preceded by Sir George Arthur and followed by Mrs Nevinson (Evelyn Sharp). Coming out, Sir George told us that he saw his first play in 1869, id est 73 years ago. The announcer asked him who was the greatest player he had seen in all those years,

and the old boy answered like a shot : " Sarah Bernhardt, incomparably." Charming Mrs Nevinston then chimed in : " But wasn't she sometimes bad ? I saw her once and she was quite bad." " Madam," said Sir George, straightening himself up, " I would much rather have seen Sarah Bernhardt being bad than any other player being good." Methought you'd like to know this, Jamie.

Your
JOCK

July 1 Billy Bennett, the music-hall comedian, died *Wednesday*. yesterday. At the Brains Trust at Horsham the question was asked : " Are dirty jokes permissible, and where should the line be drawn ? " I said that jokes which have to do with the natural functions of the mind and body are permissible, whereas jokes which palliate and condone the infiltration of the normal and healthy by the abnormal and unhealthy are impermissible. This answer understood, shall I say intermittently, by the South Loamshires would seem to let in Rabelais, Montaigne, Swift, Sterne, Smollett, and the Restoration dramatists, while letting out writers of thrillers obnoxious to the police. It would equally keep in the great succession of British music-hall comedians from Arthur Roberts to George Robey, while excluding the modern exploiters of the innuendo and the leer. Billy Bennett was forthright, bawdy, and wholesome. He knew that what sailors and soldiers on leave look for is not a rock bun, a symphony concert, or a lecture on modern poetry. He knew that a Saturday night audience is a crowd of clerks and shop assistants, let out after being pent up for the week in warehouse or store. He was a wiser man than Burke, who ought to have known that vice which loses its grossness doubles its evil. Bennett's grossness had that gusto about it which is like a high wind blowing over a noisome place. He never meant more or worse than he raucously proclaimed. Sometimes you said to yourself in half-delighted, half-fearful apprehension : " Surely he isn't going to suggest . . ." Which was foolish of you, because Bennett never suggested anything. He said what he had to say, and emptied his mind of the matter very much as our eighteenth-century caricaturists would show viragoes at upper windows emptying their wrath and other things on the heads of those below. Bennett will live in the annals of the music-hall.

Nobody who ever saw him is likely to forget that rubicund, unæsthetic countenance, that black, plastered quiff, that sergeant-major's moustache, that dreadful dinner-jacket, that well-used dickey and seedy collar, the too-short trousers, the hob-nailed boots, the red silk handkerchief tucked into the waistcoat, the continual perspiration which was the outward and visible sign of a mind struggling for expression—these things will not be forgotten. His best witticism was that in which he deplored his permanent non-success at Huddersfield—"They take me for a baritone." He raised every night in the week to the level of Saturday night, gave his audience infinite amusement, and never uttered a word at which sensible people could take offence. Off the stage he had a manner quiet almost to shyness, in keeping with his gentle and wholly nice mind.

July 8 To the Proms with Gwen Chenhalls. Superb performance of the *Symphonie Fantastique*, grandly conducted by Basil Cameron. But why didn't Berlioz end the symphony with the "Marche au Supplice"? Sheer composer's vanity, of course, and some nonsense about finishing the story. Also because, like Wagner, he had no sense of the point at which, in the hearer, saturation is reached. The "Marche" is one of the most final things in music, in the sense of bringing a work to an end; there is no more going beyond it than you can go beyond the buffers at Euston Station. The "Ronde du Sabbat," immensely fine though it is, must always be an anticlimax, since not even genius can end a work twice. But no. Berlioz was the victim of his own *idée fixe*, and because he could twist and turn his theme still further, we must stay to listen. In my view he should have added a bit to this pretended last movement and turned it into a symphonic poem on the same theme.

July 8 I propose to consider, scientifically and impartially, *Wednesday.* the economics of walking, bus-ing, and tubing as distinct from taxi-ing. Leaving the flat of some friends in the Cromwell Road where I spent last night I rejected a passing taxi and wended my way more or less gaily down that exorbitant thoroughfare, only lightly encumbered by suitcase and overcoat. Thence by tube from Gloucester Road to Baker

Street, where I located the Bakerloo with little or no difficulty. An agreeable wait while Watford's demands were attended to, and in next to no time I found myself alighting at Swiss Cottage, whence, on foot, I descended to the Villa Volpone. Gain : six or even seven shillings. Loss : half-an-hour. So engaging was the experience that I propose to lose a further couple of half-hours in keeping and getting away from to-day's West End luncheon engagement, and a third half-hour in hieing me to-night to John's *Macbeth*. By this means I shall save a pound a day. But I shall lose two hours' working time. Now putting my earnings at £4000 a year, and agreeing a working year of 318 days and a working day of 10 hours, every two hours brings me in £2, 10s. The result of this economy stunt, therefore, is that I save £318 a year and lose £782, 10s. Net loss £469, 10s. P'tre Lewis Carroll. If it be cleverly argued that, my salaries being constant, I am not affected, I shall counter that (a) I have to put in two more hours per day to make up for the time lost in peregrinating, or (b) that I must intensively cram ten hours into eight. I put the strain resulting from this higher than a paltry saving of £318.

July 10 Here is what I am saying on Sunday about the
Friday, revival of *Macbeth* :

Shakespeare in this play set Mr Gielgud, the actor, a problem which he proceeded to solve as nearly as it admitted of solution ; Mr Gielgud, the producer, wilfully, and with his eyes open, set himself another problem which he did not solve—the actress to lead with him. Walkley divided actresses into mouseys-pouseys and roguey-pogueys : I will never rank Lady Macbeth among the teenie-weenies.

The first poser was the old difficulty of reconciling Ross's description of Macbeth as "Bellona's bridegroom" with the hag-ridden neurotic. Mr Gielgud failed here, as every Macbeth worth seeing must fail, Nature not having seen fit to endow cart-horses with the nervous system of thoroughbreds, or successful generals with a genius for the introspective. Heaven protect us from the Macbeth who strides on to the stage like Kitchener at Omdurman, and for the rest of the evening barks the poet's lines as though they were words of command in an Aldershot review. Mr Gielgud did his audience at the Piccadilly the courtesy of pretence ; he gave Macbeth at his first

entry a swashing and martial outside, though low in tone, gaunt and sombre like an El Greco. Having discharged the formal reply to his sovereign, and with the gloriously delivered "Stars, hide your fires," Mr Gielgud dropped the warrior and bent up each corporal and intellectual agent to the terrible feat of interpreting the most poetic of all murderers. He spoke the verse beautifully throughout, and was, I thought, particularly fine in the Dagger soliloquy, and the "Seeling night" and "To-morrow" speeches. Of the last, one would repeat what Mr Maurice Baring wrote about another player: "One felt that for the perfect utterance of beautiful words this was the Pillars of Hercules of mortal achievement."

But to speak Macbeth beautifully is not to act him fully; the actor still fails who is content with being *profond et rêveur* in the Lemaître manner. Mr Gielgud was not thus content. His collapse immediately after the murder was a masterpiece of nerves well matched by the truly magnificent virtuosity of the Banquet Scene, where the actor went all out. Contrary to most Macbeths, with whom going all out means petering out the rest of the way, Mr Gielgud went on to finer achievement in the immensely difficult Apparition Scene, and overtopped this by holding together those final fragments where, if anybody is in danger of going to pieces, it is Shakespeare. All of this shows the command by the actor of immense reserves of nervous force, to which one must add imaginative control. Too often the short-long speech about the "yesting waves" is a mere gabble; Mr Gielgud untied the winds very much as three nights previously we had heard Sibelius untie them in the Prelude to *The Tempest*. If not the whole of Macbeth, then "a piece of him," as Horatio would say.

I think it is Goethe who maintains that the play ought to have been called *Lady Macbeth*. Which, of course, settles the lady's size. If that is not enough, there is our old friend the *optique du théâtre*, which in this case I should prefer to call *l'optique du sens commun*. There is no law of Nature which ordains that in real life murderers shall not be little women and bad wives, and it can be plausibly argued that the soul of a Goneril is fittingly encased in the body of a Miss Mowcher. On the stage such a Goneril would not look right, any more than a strapping Cordelia or a plain Juliet would look right. *And that is all there is to it.* Miss Ffrangcon-Davies is a delightful actress in comedy whom we last saw as Gwendolen in Wilde's farce. But could she have swelled to the overpowering architecture of Gwendolen's Mamma? I think not. And if not Lady Bracknell, then a hundred times not Lady Macbeth. She does not fill the eye. The question is not one of mere

inches ; Rachel had very few more than Miss Davies. But the deep tones in which the French actress delivered Phèdre's apostrophe to the sun

Soleil ! je te viens voir pour la dernière fois—

are part of theatrical history ; they are the tones which Lady Macbeth *must* use for her

O, never
Shall sun that morrow see !

Miss Davies's light mezzo-contralto simply hasn't got these tones ; with her the observation is merely barometric. Scorn is the deepest note in this actress's register ; scorn accompanied by an expression of faint disgust. She can neither speak daggers nor look them. I am compelled to say of this Lady Macbeth that which, changing the pronouns, Lewes said of Macready's Thane : " She was irritable where she should have been passionate, querulous where she should have been terrible." In place of the master mind, the nagging spouse ; so that one questioned whether the likes of 'er would have succeeded in putting it over the likes of 'im. More Shakespeareanly, " Nought's had, all's spent " sums up a clever, well-thought-out, and always courageous tackling by a gifted actress who is not a tragédienne of a part which makes the maximum call on tragic implementation.¹

Mr Nicholas Hannen bestows upon Duncan the Maeterlinckian quality of sweetness in old age. Mr Leon Quartermaine endows Banquo with a beautiful honesty, and Mr Francis Lister gives Macduff his full pathos. Mr George Woodbridge's Porter is allowed to indulge in caperings which hint that this play is the next to be taken in the balletomane's ravishing stride. If this is so, I suggest that whoever is interested should borrow Messrs Ayrton and Minton's scenery and Mr Walton's music, and get it over.

The plain truth of the matter is that John ought not to have offered Ffrangcon-Davies the part, and, alternatively, that she should have had the strength of mind to refuse it.

¹ Immediately after this article appeared I received a number of letters saying that " a delightful actress in comedy " and " a gifted actress who is not a tragédienne " are an inadequate description of Miss Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies. " Surely she is entitled to be considered a serious actress ? " I agree about the seriousness, and disagree about the inadequacy. I was not epitomising the art of a player I have always admired. In the cramped space imposed by the paper shortage contributors to newspapers are forced to write a kind of shorthand, and I suggest that the readers of newspapers are under an obligation to read in the same way. Here is part of an article which appeared in the *Sunday Times* for

July 14 From James Bridie :
Tuesday.

At 8 Camstradden Drive East,
Bearsden,
Dumbartonshire,
July 18th, 1942

DEAR JAMES AGATE,

In your abstract and brief chronicle of Gielgud's *Macbeth* I think that you record a piece of History that will mislead Posterity. You may be right and I would not go so far as to say that you are wrong, especially as everybody seems to agree with you, but you have missed an essential point about Gwen Davies's *Lady Macbeth*. There is nothing whatever in the text that makes Lady M. a giantess with the face of a horse. It is one of these foolish tumours that grow on the Stage, that tradition. I shouldn't be surprised if Fielding was

May 18, 1930, on the occasion of the revival of *Magda*, showing my more lengthily considered view of this talented player :

As I am in duty bound to scold Miss Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies for possessing the defect of the highest quality proper to any actress, let me begin by defining that quality. Briefly, it is the belief that the player can so discipline executive powers as to be able to use the whole or any part of them to carry out every conception of which her imagination is capable, plus the will to put that belief into action. The defect of that highest quality is the reluctance to perceive that expression is necessarily subject to physical limitations. "We'll e'en to it like French falconers, fly at anything we see," said Hamlet. To show with what avidity Miss Ffrangcon-Davies has flown at anything and everything, I will jot down some of the parts which she has played in the last three or four years : *Maya*, *Tess*, *Cordelia*, *Titanic*, *Mr Shaw's Cleopatra*, *Elconora* in *Strindberg's Easter*, *Juliet*, *Ophelia*, *Mrs Herbert* in *The Lady with a Lamp*, *Lady Macbeth*, *Nora*. It is unnecessary to insist upon the intellectual enterprise which this list shows, and it is not my purpose to appraise the wealth and fluidity of the achievement. My intention is rather to point to certain failures, using the word to connote the discarding of the author's character and the substitution of other exquisiteness. Ransack Marseilles from end to end and you would not find such a *Maya* ; this *Lady Macbeth* could not have looked upon a dagger ; that *Tess* was as far removed from the elemental creature of the soil as *Dresden* is from earthenware. Yet in each case disparity was made good with so much imaginative subtlety that though the senses were starved the mind was satisfied. Offer a hungry navy nectar and ambrosia in place of his expected steak and bottle of beer and he may well think that he has enjoyed a feast without having had a meal. One repeats that the one admissible charge against Miss Ffrangcon-Davies's artistry in her refusal to recognise that her physical means are finite.

In the days before the war there would have been room for such a word. On the other hand I might equally well have denied the necessity. When John Taylor fell on Mrs Siddons for attempting *Rosalind*—"We must pronounce her utterly void of that humour which is the soul of Comedy. . . . Did the audience laugh ? Were they diverted ? No."—he did not think it necessary to dilate upon the actress's merits as a tragic performer. He was conducting "a candid examination of her talents for the line of acting which she had recently engaged in." It was "a duty which we owe to the public." Even at the distance of a hundred and fifty years the principle holds.

trying to kill it in *Tom Thumb the Great*. On the contrary, the Woman is a correct Pictish heroine. How Shakespeare invented her with what must have been a very superficial knowledge of Picts I do not know. The fact remains that his creation fits a picture very familiar to anyone who has lived in the Highlands or read their stories and legends.

Gwen is a Pict and everything she said and did and felt was, as far as I can judge, absolutely authentic and very frightening indeed. These little black-avised things, who never have a grey hair in their heads when they are eighty and smile with their mouths only and could charm the sea-water heart out of a jellyfish, have, among other things, a burning fire of loyalty in their bodies that burns up all common decency and ruth. Prince Charlie, who was a dead loss and a wet smack, was never given up by the Highlanders because they knew that their wives would poison them most politely at the first sign of funny business—and would not let them know by a flicker of an eyelid that they had suspected anything. They are very subtle and full to the neck of the most peculiar emotions. They manœuvre and cheat these emotions, too, in the most extraordinary way. Have a look at Pegeen Mike and the Widow Quin. Neither of them is Lady Macbeth, but you can't understand Lady Macbeth without knowing them.

"And your point, Mr Russell?" My point is that Gwen is the first actress I have ever seen or read of to give us a real Highland Lady Macbeth, subtle, hysterical and bloody and restrained, and it is a pity that she has had no credit for it. All this may be in the eye of the beholder, but I don't think so. I thought I'd tell you.

With the kindest regards,

Sincerely yours,

JAMES BRIDIE

My reply :

10 Fairfax Road

N.W. 6

July 20th, 1942

DEAR BRIDIE,

Your letter has given me extraordinary pleasure without carrying the least conviction. It is, like everything of yours, well and subtly argued. But it is based on the absurd supposition that Shakespeare cared two pins about ethnology. The string-pulling Lady Macbeth may in real life have looked like Graham Moffat's Bunt, but I don't believe Shakespeare saw her as anything of the kind. I remember standing with George Bishop on the deck of a steamer going down the

Mediterranean. Presently we sighted the featureless strip of land which is Tangier. George said, "Not my notion of Africa!" Gwen's Lady Macbeth is not my notion of the character, and I feel in my bones that it was not Shakespeare's. Even if right racially it is wrong dramatically. As a dramatist you must know that Shakespeare is not reconstructing a Highland crime for the benefit of a Highland coroner, but writing a play about Scotland for the delectation of a London audience. It is quite possible that the real Lady M. never betrayed anything by the flicker of an eyelid. But what, pray, has that to do with her stage counterpart? The stage Lady Macbeth asking the spirits to unsex her, thicken her blood, take her milk for gull, and all the rest of it, must look as though she meant it. I don't say Gwen didn't mean it. I could see her trying to mean it. But she didn't convince me that Lady M. was meaning it; she just hadn't the voice and look to mean it with. "In each of her eyes sat a devil." Charlotte Brontë could never have said this of Gwen.

I don't demand that Lady M. should be a "giantess with the face of a horse." But I insist that she fill the mind, and it helps if the actress can begin by filling the eye. Charlotte Brontë's Vashti was "but a frail creature." Yet we read: "As the action rose and the stir deepened how wildly they [the evil forces] shook her with their passions of the pit! They wrote HELL on her straight, haughty brow. They tuned her voice to the note of torment. They writhed her regal face to a demoniac mask. Hate and Murder and Madness incarnate she stood." This, all but the madness, is what Lady Macbeth should be. I found none of it in Gwen's performance. Please don't deduce from this that I think poorly of a very clever player. Hazlitt writes: "Of Miss Campbell's Lady Macbeth we are almost afraid to speak, because we cannot speak favourably of it; yet a failure in this part is by no means decisive against the general merits of an actress." This goes for Gwen too.

But enough about Lady M. I thought I should have got into more trouble with you over her better half. Macbeth must always give both actor and critic a lot of trouble. He is a soldier whose springs of action have been weakened by excess of imagination. He is rotten as a pear is rotten.

Then comes my fit again: I had else been perfect,
Whole as the marble, founded as the rock . . .

applies not only to his fears but to his attacks of poetry, after which he returns to his action-plot just as your recovered epileptic will go about his ordinary business. In all my

experience I have only seen two Macbeths who combined the warrior with the poet. Benson did it by throwing together his Henry V and Richard II. Whether he knew what he was up to I don't know; he was the best Macbeth I ever saw. Next was old William Mollison, who alternated dourness with a habit of going off into trances; it was as though some spiritualist medium had taken control. I have it from his son William, the producer, that this was exactly what his father intended. Your ideal Macbeth is a man of action breaking down into the poet almost as science tells us that matter breaks down. Now Gielgud is never a soldier. He is a poet first and last, who from time to time remembers that he must build himself up into a soldier. An exquisite performance, not quite right. And never can be. Again a matter of physical limitations. I think Quartermaine's Banquo is the best I have ever seen.

From your old friend,
JAMES AGATE

July 15 My post-bag for the past ten days has contained
Wednesday. the following :

1. Airgraph from George Wickens, my ex-chauffeur, now very hot and happy in Egypt.
2. A volume of modern poetry, John Heath-Stubbs's *Wounded Thammuz*, from which I cull a stanza—if stanza's the word—of vocables that would have broken Browning's front teeth.

Where shoulder-high grows all the fire-fringed bracken,
Or where the squirrel whisks,
Or green to needled ant-hills' turgid traffic
The hobbling wood-spite dips ;
Away, white-flagged, the startled rabbit goes,
Out of her thorn-thatched bed leaps up the bouncing doe.

8. An unpublished poem. I open at random and read :

Perplexity is a blackened blasted orchard :
The sorrowing branches are draped in serpents.
Let us rush away
On horses without legs
Across hillmounds without summit . . .

Shall tell the author to send this to a critic who knows more about poetry and less about horses.

4. Letter from Edgar Lustgarten :

Reading through my notebook yesterday, I re-discovered some of your best things. This for instance: "The passionate desire of every manly little boy is to grow up and have fun like grown-ups. Peter Pan gives me the impression that his creator was once a little girl." First-class, though I could find more typical examples of your style which, though never good, is never flabby. The full stop always comes six or seven words sooner than one expects.

5. Cutting from the *St James's Gazette* for a date in 1905 announcing Tree's revival of *Much Ado*, and quoting James Anderson, the actor, as saying of Macready as Benedick that he was "as dull as a mourning-coach in a snow-storm."

6. The *Stage Year Book* for 1913. Article by E. A. Baughan, containing the following extraordinary statements :

Why Sardou's *Diplomacy* has been successful I do not know, except that the conduct of the plot is exciting, and it gives many opportunities for broad and emotional acting.

Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion* was poor fooling and not altogether without offence.

The environment of Ibsen's dramas is unnecessarily sordid and ugly. His people have an irritating lack of even the common attributes of humanity.

Yet Baughan died respected by all.

7. An extract from Jock's notice in *Time and Tide* of *The Man who came to Dinner*. I heard rumours of this at the time, but did not see the article.

Sheridan Whiteside is a roaring, tearing monster of a petted and pampered dramatic critic. He is a hurly-burly of a man, too witty to be wise, kind by fits and starts but unkind continuously, and as designing as any boy of five caught near a pantry door. His friends dread him, and his enemies make allowances for him. Early in life he has discovered that he possesses charm, and he uses this mysterious power to elaborately illicit purpose, cowing secretaries, dispelling duns, and warding off all decent obligations. He manages it shrewdly. He uses it to temper his harshness, condescension, prevarications, or sheer insults. He turns it, at will, into wheedling, cajolery, and a gift for making his satellites do things against their own desire and, of course, to his own advantage. He has a peculiar talent for making those he has wronged feel mean about not forgiving him. He has a genius for eating his cake

and still having it. He adores tripping up anybody and everybody. He is malicious, yet somehow too big to be quite petty. He is easy to malign, but never sufficiently maligned. He is an odd and impossible, yet perfectly human and quite irresistible compound of Skimpole and Quilp and Mr Micawber. He somehow obtains everything in life—nay, life itself—at a considerable discount, and he somehow makes all those feel base and common who dare to grudge him the lordly privilege. He is too small in one sense to be called truly great in any sense. He is exactly what Ellen Terry meant when she called D'Annunzio a "great little fellow." His writings amuse half the world, and set the other half by the ears. He is a vulgar exquisite, an exquisite vulgarian. He is a living, breathing, writing, talking paradox; a pet and a menace, a pest and a delight. He is, in short, as like as life to Mr Alexander Woolcott or to his English counterpart on the *Sunday Times*.

Leo concurs.

July 17 *The Times* has a moving leading article entitled *Friday*. "Furniture and Fame," apropos of to-day's sale of

Irving relics. These are the mahogany bureau, two carved-wood armchairs, and two oak high-back chairs used by H. I. in *The Bells* and *The Lyons Mail*. They fetched £8, £18, and £9 respectively. I now realise that my executors will get practically nothing for Irving's press-cutting scissors presented to me by Seymour Hicks. And be quite unable to give away those scissors and that paste-brush which, my more malicious friends aver, are the real authors of this diary.

Old age is kindest to ugly women, since it makes no difference. Handsome women are the next best served; they at least take on the aspect of picturesque ruins. It is the *pretty* women who are the real tragedies of old age, since for them there is no alleviation. Dimples have become ditches. With actresses the case is infinitely worse. Here they are, at the Savoy, tottering to and from their tables, bravely, without a supporting arm, and always, always smiling. There is a passage in Emile de Molènes's book on Aimée Desclée with which every aging artist ought to be familiar:

L'artiste ne s'apprécie pas lui-même, il se croit toujours ce qu'il a été, et, à mesure que la vie lui manque, il s'attache plus étroitement à la vie de théâtre . . . Vainement les directeurs replâtrèrent un peu ce cadavre vivant et s'efforcent de la faire

accepter, en considération d'un passé qui ne brille plus. A un moment donné, toutes les réclames sont stériles. Le public se montre tout à coup implacable. La génération qui a applaudi autrefois n'est plus dans la salle, et la nouvelle génération se prend à siffler le pauvre diable dont le pas mal assuré, la face parcheminée, la voix chevrotante et le sourire édenté n'inspirent désormais que répulsion et dégoût.

If I were an actor I should have a framed copy of this standing on my make-up table in the way the Home Secretary keeps continually before him a list of persons sentenced to death.

July 18 Troubled with thick-coming fancies. Supped last
Saturday. night with Edgar Lustgarten at the Café Royal,
 where we got caught up in a müss of Hambourgs,
and I found myself involved in a three-cornered discussion about the situation in the Caucasus, the relative merits of the two Chopin concertos, and the age at which lion-cubs may be safely fondled. Dreamed I was invited to dinner by Queen Mary, and in the absence of taxis engaged a rickshaw propelled by a naked figure which turned out to be Gandhi. Eleven minutes late at Marlborough House, and just as her Majesty was graciously accepting my excuses, it turned out that eleven was the English score at the fall of the first wicket in the rubber game of a Test Series, and that I was next in. As I was buckling on my pads the 'phone woke me up. It was Jock inquiring who slew the Sophy, whether Valérie Marnesse had a sister, and what hero of what French novel had to borrow a dress-suit to go out to dinner in. Open my letters and find a long screed claiming to prove from the text that Lady Macbeth was four foot six inches high. Screed ends, "My father was at school with you, and perfectly remembers you as Cardinal Wolsey." After which I collect my thoughts, and settle down to two columns of what I think about the new version of *The Gold Rush*.

Some three hundred years hence, the Allardyce Nicolls will be debating furiously among themselves about who first called attention to Chaplin's pathos. Well, I can save them the trouble. In the *Saturday Review* for October 1, 1921, and in an article headed "Hey, but he's Doleful!" I begin by saying "I swear that there is, for me, more emotion in a single tear of *The Kid* than in all the bucketfuls of *Vesti la giubba*." And I end :

Charlie belongs to humanity and will one day belong to the ages. To-day he is one of us. His queer sorrows, his queerer scrapes, might well be ours. To meet his woes he arms his wistful soul, even as we do. He is too small for big battles; the *toga virilis* sits not well upon him. Indeed, it is not assumed. For when, at the end of the play, the Kid is received into sheltering arms, and Charlie is received too, we know which stands in the greater need of succour.

"That's a good bid, Eugene!" said Candida. I pat myself on the back and say, "That's a good bid, James!"

July 19 Brighton.

Sunday. In the cant phrase which will have no meaning after the war: Is my journey really necessary? My health thinks so, and I don't believe that my twelve stone is going to make all that difference to a train which is going anyhow. Great headlines in this morning's papers inform me that "This Will Be The Crisis Week Of The War" and "History Will Be Made In Russia And Egypt." Possibly. I can do nothing about it. Besides, there are battles to be fought at home. For example, with Ivor Brown maintaining that the supremacy of the old actor was due to the excessive sensibility of the old audience. I shall continue to dispute this in the true Bunyanesque manner till the pen grows out of my hand and the blood runs through my fingers. In the meantime the Russian affair gives cause for uneasiness. The Germans are obviously taking Hester Thrale's view that "If gunpowder enough is put under Mont Blanc, it *must* give way." Let us hope they haven't enough powder.

The first thing I did on arrival yesterday was to buy a new bowler hat. The next to take a *promenade en auto*—in tripper's English, go for a ride round. Passing the pitch-and-putt golf-course at Rottingdean I was seized with an uncontrollable desire to play golf, not having touched a club since August 1939. I got out of the taxi, bade it wait, and challenged a total stranger. The young man said he didn't play, preferring T. S. Eliot. But I insisted and gave him three strokes a hole. The course was empty except for a quartet of sailors presently engaging in a scrambling four-ball after the manner of a landing party. We

let them through, and they did the eighteen holes in the same number of minutes. Whether it was the new bowler or the fact that my glasses are not suitable to golf, I don't know ; the fact remains that I couldn't find any green, and at the twelfth hole, where my opponent was one up, hooked the ball to square leg, losing it and the match. Whereupon I said good-bye to the young man who resumed poring over Eliot, having regarded me throughout as an insane but harmless old gentleman.

Charles Smith came to dinner, which the Old Ship still does very well. A good soup, choice of salmon or chicken, a sweet, and cheese. I had a half-pint of the old Bollinger N.V. at fifteen shillings, only half-a-crown above pre-war price. To the Hippodrome afterwards, where Arthur Prince had a new dummy, a midshipman stiff and straight as a ramrod and with a marked resemblance to Ella Shields. Also Will Fyffe in a poor scene about Clydebank, but winding up with "Daft Sandy," a barefaced assault on the emotions acted in the grand manner which so annoys the quietists. Finally the Dagenham girl-pipers, the applause of listening senates to command.

Spent this, Sunday, morning writing and gazing out of the window at the barbed wire and the empty front. Occasionally one of Whitman's "tan-faced prairie-boys"—actually a yokel with the gormless Sussex expression—would come past in a bright blue suit and holding some tight-skirted, plump-legged little besom by the hand. The hotels on the right are given over to the soldiery ; those to the left are boarded up and empty. And I think of the poet's :

The summer's flower is to the summer sweet,
Though to itself it only live and die.

Brighton is living and dying to itself. My waiter at dinner last night said, "You won't see me to-morrow, sir ; I'm going for my summer holidays." I asked where he was going. "Brighton," he replied.

July 20 Dined at Dilys Powell's. Excellent cold soup, a *Monday.* noble salmon-trout, cherries, and an Alsatian white wine. Leonard Russell, Cyril Lakin and his wife, George Mathew. They were all interested, or seemed to be, in the new *Ego* ; some of them expressed views as to how the Diary

could become immortal. Lakin's notion was that I should widen the scope, which I took to mean contact with more notabilities. Russell thought I should retire to the Cotswolds and pontificate *à la Coleridge*. Both agreed that I ought to limit publication to once every five years. (How many lustrums do they think I can look forward to?) Dilys wanted me to record the size of the sugar ration, the scarcity of taxi-cabs, and the date when the Café Royal started turning customers away at half-past nine. Like a wise Tar-baby, George Mathew wasn't sayin' nuthin'. The point, of course, is that all of them, except George, want me to write *their* Diary. I shall do no such thing. I shall continue to abound in my own sense. I shall continue to write *my* Diary, let events and people come to me, and discourse about such of them as interest me, always remembering that I take more kindly to an old clown than to a new general. Just as I have never embellished, so I shall not pad. The present-day truncated dramatic criticisms will never be reprinted. But that is no reason why some record of a notable production or fine piece of acting should not be preserved. With this object in view, if it pleases me to quote part, or even the whole, of a *Sunday Times* article, I shall do so. I shall issue a volume every two years for as long as I am spared, or until George tells me I am written out. He is my literary executor, with powers to start work at any time.

July 21 Musical criticism at its best. From a notice in the *Tuesday. Kentish Independent and Kentish Mail* of Moiseiwitsch's recent piano recital.

Superlative things conjoined in Greenwich to make Thursday evening a memorable one for a thousand people—a brilliant company in the beautiful interior of the Borough Hall to hear the foremost pianoforte player of the day. It was not the charm of the handsome building that drew them, not the presence of the Lord Mayor of London and the civic heads of the Metropolitan boroughs, not even Mrs Churchill, for she was an unexpected guest, but one man, Moiseiwitsch, was the cause and sanction of the event and its crowning memory. They came to hear him play, and other things were subordinated to that. They did not even know beforehand what music he would choose to play them. It was a joy to sit in the charming hall that is the envy of other boroughs; a

thrill to watch the arrival of the civic dignitaries from all over London, to see Mrs Churchill in the company of the Mayoress of Greenwich. They applauded all that, and appreciated the Mayor's well-phrased introduction, but it was when Moiseiwitsch appeared that they gave their eager welcome and settled back to hear the first touch of his fingers on the keys.

It was a cheerful and invigorating note that he struck with the *Appassionata* sonata of Beethoven . . . Moiseiwitsch may have been playing down to popular taste to make the overture to *Tannhäuser*, in Liszt's transcription, his finale. A bit of Wagner is sure to rouse, anyway, and the audience were completely enthusiastic in their reception. But it was not merely that they heard a familiar theme well played—they had never heard anything like it from a piano before. Liszt had reduced Wagner's masterpiece to the compass of a piano, but Moiseiwitsch expanded it all to the dimensions of a grand orchestra and filled the hall with the vibrant brilliance of the stirring music. And then, when the applause ceased on his seating himself once more at the piano, he played with his left hand only, just to show he can do equally well with one hand as with two.

Nothing has pleased me so much since I cut out of the *Berwickshire News* for November 20, 1906, a criticism of St John Hankin's *The Return of the Prodigal*. This ran to four columns of closely printed type. Here is a bit of a remarkable piece of writing containing more purple patches than the *Daily Telegraph* at its most iridescent :

It's an old tale this—"Lost to Sight, Lost to Mind." This eminently respectable family, moving in apparently good circles, has got rid of its Skeleton—its "Prodigal," and they thank Heaven for their good luck. Alas, "The Mills of God Grind Slowly, yet They Grind Exceeding Small"; and the Prodigal comes home again at the usual inconvenient time—at least for this eminently respectable, presumably God-fearing Family. How true it all is to Nature—to Everyday Life!

Act I. The author introduces us to the usual social round of "So-Pleased-to-Meet-You" nothingnesses. Scarce a word is mentioned of the Prodigal—"Blood of Their Blood, Flesh of Their Flesh, and Bone of Their Bone"—but, just as the cloud no bigger than a man's hand comes up on the horizon and develops into a rain-storm and a gale and a blizzard, so back, inopportunately, comes the Prodigal to the home of his Father. And where better right has he to come? Let the mother that bore him and the father that rejoiced in his birth say!

Had we been writing *The Return of the Prodigal*, we fancy we would have worked up, with all the intensity possible, to the actual carrying in and laying down on the sofa of the Prodigal Son; and then we might have made it the point for the other son—the schemer who is at profitable peace with his rich and well-placed parents—to have said “Father, it is he who has disgraced us.” Whereupon, remembering the beautiful words of one of our most beautiful hymns :

Can a woman's tender care
Cease towards the child she bare ?

the mother, ever-forgiving, might assuredly say, with the utmost dramatic fervour, “My son, my son,” then embrace him and cry, “Thank God for his safe return Home,” faint right away, and—Curtain ! And, in our opinion, an intensely dramatic curtain, too—a thunder-clap, nothing more nor less.

“I have Played the Triangle,” says the Prodigal summing up his experiences among the Flotsam and the Jetsam of the World. And this, to us, seems to sum up the first act of Mr St J. Hankin's clever new play of sunshine and shadow, which was so successfully staged last night at the Queen's Rooms Theatre, Berwick-on-Tweed.

July 22 Henry Wood once told me that however well he *Wednesday.* knows a work he invariably goes through it in his mind before conducting it at a concert. I think the critics should do the same about the great plays, and when, say, Ibsen is in the wind, go to the theatre full of *Rosmersholm*, *The Master Builder*, or whatever the play may be. Accordingly I put all my work on one side to-day, and got ready for to-night's revival of *Othello*. Looked up all I have written on the subject, also the *novella* of Gian Battista Giral-di-Cinthio (1504-73) in the English version Jock and I made some years ago.

There was in the Moor's company a standard-bearer of very handsome appearance, but in his secret nature one of the most depraved of men. The Moor had for him much affection and regard, being unaware of his many vices. For although he was of a most vile character, he hid this behind proud and high-flown language and fair seeming, so that despite his black heart he looked more like to a Hector or an Achilles. This villain had brought his wife to Cyprus, a fair and honest young woman who, being Italian, was much loved of the Moor's wife, and spent the greater part of the day with her.

In the same company was also a certain captain much

beloved of the Moor. This captain was a frequent visitor at the Moor's house and dined with him and his wife. Thus the wife, who knew the captain to be well liked of her husband, showed herself well disposed towards him, whereby the Moor was greatly pleased. The wicked standard-bearer, regardless of his wife's trust in him, of friendship and faith and duty to the Moor, was violently enamoured of Desdemona, and his sole thought was how he might possess her. This he dared not to show, fearing that if the Moor discovered his passion he would straightway slay him. By various means he tried, with all secrecy, to make the lady aware of his love, but she, thoughtful of none but the Moor, had not regard for the standard-bearer, nor for any man else. So his love for the lady changed to deadly hatred. He determined that if he might not possess the lady, the Moor should not possess her either.

But this is admirable! Iago in love with Desdemona (spelt "Disdemona" in Cinthio) has more reason for bitterness than the average rejected suitor, in that she prefers not one of his colour but a blackamoor. Now comes the vital question. What made Shakespeare decide not to use this motive, of which he must have known? What made him think that a motiveless Iago would be more dramatic? Shakespeare's *flair* is always unerring, and he probably saw that to make Iago in love with Desdemona would weaken the play's main interest instead of strengthening it. In any case it would have turned out a totally different play, which it is impossible for us to judge, for the simple reason that Shakespeare preferred not to write it. Almost the most dramatic thing in the play we have is Desdemona's: "Hark! who is't that knocks?" and Emilia's reply "It's the wind." This knock occurs in Cinthio, who now continues as follows:

In the morning the rumour of the captain's death spread over the town, and at length reached Desdemona's ears. She, a tender woman, little suspectful that any harm might come of it, showed herself much distressed. This much displeased the Moor, who, going to the standard-bearer, said to him: "You know well that this wretch, my wife, is grieved by the news of the captain, and even like to lose her wits in sorrow. Is he, then, all she has to live for?" And so they fell to discussing whether the lady should die by poison or by dagger. At length, and after failing to agree, the standard-bearer said: "I have thought of a way which no one will suspect. Your

house is old and the floor of your chamber is cracked. Let me strike Disdemona with a stocking filled with sand, so that she may die without any sign of wounding. We may then pretend that a beam has fallen and has killed her, and all will be allowed to accident."

The Moor was much pleased with this wicked counsel. Having awaited a convenient time, being in bed with his lady one night and having concealed the standard-bearer in an ante-chamber, the latter did by arrangement make a noise in his closet, whereby the Moor said suddenly to his wife: "Didst hear a noise?" whereat the lady arose to see what this might be. As soon as the unfortunate Disdemona came to the door of the closet the standard-bearer lustily did strike her so that she fell, and with what little breath was left to her, called the Moor to her aid. To her the Moor: "Strumpet, this is thy reward, and let such be the reward of all who make their spouses cuckolds!" The poor lady saw her death before her, the murderer striking her yet again, and called on divine justice as witness of her fidelity, since worldly justice had availed her nought. Calling on her God, she was stricken again and killed by the impious standard-bearer. Having placed her upon the bed, he and the Moor caused the floor of the room to fall, whereafter the Moor summoned help because the house was falling down. At this the neighbours came running and found the lady dead beneath the fallen beams.

In the end both the Moor and the standard-bearer get into all sorts of troubles alien to Shakespeare's play, the upshot being that both are tortured and put to death.

Greatly impressed by Frederick Valk's performance, as, indeed, I expected to be. I thought very highly of him when he played the small part of the doctor in *Thunder Rock*. Got home early and straight to bed as I intend to write a full-dress article to-morrow.

July 23 Spent the day over my *Othello* notice.
Thursday.

July 24 Again wrestled with my *Othello* stuff. The *S.T.* rang
Friday. up to say that owing to extraordinary pressure on their space they must ask me to write less than usual. Which meant taking up the scissors and giving the luxuriant thing a hair-cut and shave.

Dined with the Cochrans at their new flat. Chicken and

champagne. Evelyn, in great form, told us about Merton Hodge, and how he had called on her that afternoon "and sweetly and kindly read me a very long play." Charles full of good stories, including one about the P.M. returning to this country from America knowing he must face a House of Commons inquest on the set-back in Libya. His last words on getting into the plane were "And now for England, Home, Beauty, and a hell of a row!"

July 25 Here is the article as it was originally conceived,
Saturday. and some of which I hope to get into to-morrow's paper.

THE MOOR AT LAST

Othello, above all other tragic personages, needs great physical qualities in the performer.—G. H. LEWES.

A physically insignificant Othello is inconceivable.

—W. T. ARNOLD.

Othello is, for the actor, the most formidable rôle in Shakespeare, since it makes the greatest demands on temperament. Now temperament is largely a matter of nationality; every little pastry-cook in Italy washes him in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire each time his wife makes eyes at the apprentice. If this quality is not present the performance must fail, and it is only when one is satisfied about this that it is worth while asking whether the actor has the requisite looks and presence, nobility and power, the faculty to suggest moral grandeur, and the ability to deliver verse. The part annihilates pretentiousness, and shows quietism the door. It goes against the English grain, demanding *fougue* from a race famous for phlegm; chopping into messes—the Moor's way with wantonness—is not what we call cricket. Over and over again this unique rôle has defeated the English actor constitutionally averse from sawing his nether lip. Kemble, "dry and tearless—was going to begin, but nothing came of it." Macready "whined and whimpered." Forester "judiciously incapable in gold lace and crimson cotton velvet like an old-fashioned pulpit." Young "left no recollection." Phelps's performance "was far from his best." My beloved Irving "resembled one of Fenimore Cooper's Mohawk braves wrapped in his blanket." Wilson Barrett "was like a temperance lecturer." Forbes-Robertson "did not harrow us, did not freeze the blood in our veins." Paul Robeson "was a cringing tower.

He walked with a stoop, his body sagged, his hands appeared to hang below his knees, his whole bearing, gait, and diction were full of humility and apology: the inferiority-complex in a word. This was nigger Shakespeare." Wilfrid Walter "was careful and perfunctory." Abraham Sofaer "lacked that on which the whole nature of Othello is built—temperament." Ernest Milton "gave the unsatisfying performance of a highly intelligent actor struggling against natural deficiencies." That good comedian Ralph Richardson was "an almost total failure." That fine player Donald Wolfitt "wanted a banjo." The few exceptions were Edmund Kean, "the finest piece of acting in the world," and the too-little remembered G. V. Brooke. In my day there have been Godfrey Tearle, always granting that Othello was a Spanish grandee in disguise, Edmund Willard, who made a brave shot and few mistakes, and Baliol Holloway, who wound up a fine performance by lying prone like an All-Black scoring a try, and then took his curtain-call with the jauntiness of one who has converted the try into a goal. Authorities: Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, Cook, Knight, Shaw, Grein, Agate.

Free of the English handicap, the Czech actor Mr Frederick Valk struck at once the note of immense dignity. Rightly he declined to make points in Othello's "round unvarnish'd tale," preferring to play himself in, and give us time to take stock of his physical qualifications. Had the actor a mobile and *expressive* countenance? Did the neck-muscles bespeak virility? Was the head properly set on the shoulders? And were these broad enough to come through the "moving accidents by flood and field"? One has seen Othellos so reduced by slavery that like Mesty in *Midshipman Easy* they are only fit to "boil de kettle for de young gentlemen." Had the actor's voice that ringing tone which in this country has for so long been the monopoly of the telephonic service? Mr Valk's delivery of "Keep up your bright swords" settled that point. Long before the landing in Cyprus, any playgoer with half an eye and half an ear must have been satisfied that here was an authentic tragedian. Very skilfully this fine player avoided the trap of too easily believing in Desdemona's guilt, and equally he resisted the temptation to overdo the epilepsy. The ravages eating into Othello's mind are more terrible still, and Mr Valk went on to fulfil them completely. Remarkable throughout was the ground-swell of passion, which, when the storm intermitted, did not subside all at once. But an actor may do all this and yet not be Othello. An English bishop, visiting Anatolia, entered a café and seated himself at a table opposite a large blond man eating spaghetti. Affably he

began, "I hear you have been much troubled with massacres?" Waving his fork, the man replied, "Monsieur, avec ce bras j'ai éventré six femmes et dix enfants!" This is Othello's vein—the return, once the veneer of civilisation is discarded, to the simple-minded, natural butcher. The Moor is *au fond* child and savage; he is *not* a Don Diègue strayed out of Corneille after getting himself painted the wrong colour. Mr Valk conveyed what should be conveyed in Titian-like gestures and with sufficient poetry. Sufficient provided the spectator does his share. Is the foreign actor essaying Shakespeare *thinking* Shakespeare's poetry? If the spectator is convinced of this, it becomes his duty to help the actor in the matter of flow and cadence. Mr Valk obviously knew when Othello should be speaking poetry, and one spectator at least was willing to do the rest for him. His exits had a sweeping grandeur more satisfying than most English actors' entrances, and my one suggestion is that he should discover a volume of tone somewhere between *ff.* and *pp.* This being found, I announce the best Othello since Salvini, "king of them all by his birthright under Southern suns."¹

A foreign accent may well be conceded to the Moor;

¹ I do not pretend to have seen Salvini, whose last performance of Othello in this country took place two years before I was born. Neither did I see Grasso, about whom I must be content to take Sir Max Beerbohm's view. "To regard Signor Grasso as from the English standpoint a passable Othello—let alone a 'superb' one—is possible only to people who cannot distinguish tragedy from 'knockabout.' . . . Strength Signor Grasso has. Dignity, a sense of beauty, intellect, he may have; but there is no sign of them. . . . Let us not make fools of ourselves about his alleged Othello." And there are other gaps. I did not see Benson, Bourchier, Hubert Carter, Lewis Waller, Oscar Asche, Tree, or Matheson Lang. The last-named may well have been a good Othello; the pity of it was that he preferred to stomp the country with a hybrid called *Carnival*, in which, if I remember rightly, he went to a fancy dress ball dressed as the Moor. I also did not see Randle Ayrton, though, judging from his *Ford*, he must have been very fine. Last on my list of Othellos overlooked is John Laurie, of whom a brother critic wrote that it was "an exciting presentation of a neurotic Arab." This raises another point—the sixth sense of the dramatic critic, enabling him to reconstruct a past performance, or deduce a present one from what he already knows about a particular player. Of the last-named actor's Ferdinand in *The Duchess of Malfi* I wrote that "Mr Laurie, despite his ravings, writhings, reelings, never came near frightening me; one brushed him off the mind like a fly. This actor's voice is too light, and what he falls into is a pet rather than a rage; the harder he acts, the more peevish that pet comes." I may be doing Laurie an injustice, but I do not believe that he can alter the timbre of his voice or keep peevishness away; on the other hand I can see he would be admirable as Iago. If my view be correct, then Laurie's Othello is ruled out, just as my sixth sense would rule out his immediate forerunners with the exception of Lang and Ayrton. I do not hold Valk's performance to be ideal. It is a good performance because it contains the three essential things: nobility, temperament, and that suggestion of being pole-axed for which Shakespeare's expression is "perplex'd in the extreme." All the other Othellos I have seen have failed in one or other of these essential qualifications, and to possess any two and lack the third is just not to be Othello. If an actor is not Othello, then no amount of beautiful verse-

whether his Ancient should indulge in vowel-sounds reminiscent of the Waterloo Road is more questionable. And should he make-up to look like all the plays' Second Murderers rolled into one? And since Iago is Othello's standard-bearer and not his batman, must the actor not make it credible that he should come within the General's social circle? Mr Bernard Miles satisfied us on none of these points. But it was a good performance, earthy yet mercurial. Did he make the Ancient credible? No, but neither did Shakespeare. There is a good deal to be said for the point of view that the play was written at white-heat, or thrown together in a hurry, which comes to the same thing. Shakespeare was never averse to dragging in a bit of what, in Elizabethan days, passed for psychology, and perhaps with the recollection of his rival Marlowe's Mephistophilis, vanity as well as artistry told him not to be satisfied with a round unvarnished villain. The result, as Mr Shaw pointed out long ago, is a hopeless mess. Mr Miles wisely made no attempt to clear the mess up, and was amusing throughout in the manner of a black-hearted Sam Weller. As Cassio, that promising actor Mr Laurence Payne was a little over-weighted; but he tried hard and will presently do. Miss Hermione Hannen made Desdemona so fragile that one was afraid she would come apart. Miss Freda Jackson was not only extremely effective as Emilia but looked Italian to boot, and Miss Renee Ascherson will be better when Bianca stops shrieking like an express train entering a tunnel. Good scenery by Mr Frederick Crooke, delightful music by Mr Clifton Parker, first-class production by Mr Julius Gellner, the interpretation with the fewest excuses to be made for it of any recent Shakespeare production, and a triumph for the Old Vic. The fashionables stopped away, it was quite like old times, and I thought I heard Baylis applauding.

July 26 For some time I have been contemplating a new *Sunday*. series to be called *Esoterics*. Highbrowisms above my comprehension. Have been carrying No. 1 in my pocket-book for weeks. From the *New Statesman*, and part of an art criticism by Clive Bell:

In the exhibition at the New Galleries Ivon Hitchens uses just enough representation to indicate a state of mind:

speaking can save him. If he is Othello, then in the case of an actor playing in a strange tongue—Salvini acted in his own—we must expect something less than perfect delivery of the verse. Valk's faults include insufficient pathos and excessive bulk. He is slow and German, the buffalo rather than the tiger. Not by any means an ideal Othello. But I repeat, all things considered, the best I have seen.

"flowers," he says unobtrusively, and having said, makes the picture an affair between himself and his feeling for those particular flowers. The statement of the theme suffices to put the spectator at ease, no longer will he find the slightest difficulty in following the design through all its ramifications; precisely what its value to the artist may be is a more subtle and interesting question. Probably, to put the matter crudely, it keeps him straight.

No. 2 might well be the following from to-day's *Observer* in an article by Jan Gordon :

John Tunnard is a shape juggler; a black shape, a white shape, opaque or diaphanous subtly tinted shapes, he projects these into an atmosphere, fluid or carefully textured, and there holds them in elusive balance. And so, also, he holds our imaginations in balance. Wire-drawn lines, black or incised in white, give emphasis and variety at closer view. These are dreams without words, though sometimes words might lend a sharpened interest.

And what about a series to be entitled *Exoterics* ? Highbrowisms beneath anybody's comprehension. No. 1 might well be a remark in to-day's *Observer* : "I always think that a little *Carmen* would make the appropriate noises for *Othello*." With, I suppose, Desdemona crooning her "Willow Song" to Bizet's fortune-telling music ? And shall Iago swap his "Canakin clink" ditty for Escamillo's "Sirs, your toast" ? No. *Othello* and *Carmen* are two horses that won't pair.

Then how about an in-between series to be called *Mesoterics*, in which normally sensible people make sillies of themselves ? I should begin with that film-critic who with maximum infelicity tells me to-day about little Gloria Warren, the film's latest Schoolgirl with a Voice, that "there is no suggestion of precocity, of the enfante [*sic*] prodigue." One more example of inexpertness failing to get itself vetted. Why should we expect Gloria to have eaten of the husks the swine did eat ? How, with the best will in the world, can she return to a home she has never left ? We are not told even that she squanders her pocket-money. But perhaps the writer has confused "enfant prodigue" with "enfant prodige." Why not lay out a few pennies on a Larousse, and, incidentally, con the sentence, "Suzanne est une

gentille enfant" ? This matter of inaccuracy is becoming an obsession with me. I rage, I burn, but do not melt, whenever I meet it, which is all over the place. I believe there is no example of it in my own writings, or none that is humanly avoidable. If I must discuss the operation known as laparotomy I consult a laparotomist, if that branch of divination known as lampadomancy then a lampadomancer. And I look up the dictionary to see how both are spelt. But to return to Gloria. Did not this small-town Tetrizzini, in to-night's film, sing Liszt's Second Hungarian Rhapsody to mouth-organ accompaniment by the local hicks, half an hour after being tipped out of a speed-boat ? But Gloria is not, and perhaps never will be, a Jeanette MacDonald. In the mind's eye I see that diva perched on that upturned keel undeterrably bawling "Ocean, thou mighty monster !" Still, Gloria will do to be going on with.

Then there is the nature-lover, a genus which by itself writes more nonsense than the rest of the human race put together. For No. 2 let me take, again in to-day's *Observer* :

It is a true story that a young subaltern during the retreat to Dunkirk lay forgetful of the bullets whistling over his head in his excitement at seeing a hoopoe, a bird quite new to him, strutting without alarm just in front of him. The bird's crest will remain as one of the most memorable events of those devastating battles. Even so, the news on the wireless, at a crisis in events, was clean forgotten because a comma butterfly, once unknown in the district, was displaying its crooked outline on the flower head of a valerian.

To have bagged one *Esoteric*, one *Exoteric*, and two *Mesoterics* in one and the same page of a single issue of a single Sunday paper suggests that here indeed is a vein that will repay exploring.

July 27 Turning up Grove to-day, I saw a reference to *Monday*. Tappert's "*Ein Wagnerlexikon. Wörterbuch der Unhöflichkeit, enthaltend grobe, höhrende, gehässige und verleumderische Ausdrücke, welche gegen den Meister Richard Wagner von den Feinden und Spöttern gebraucht worden sind.*" I have had the notion of compiling a similar *Schimpflexikon*, which I present as an

INTAGLIO

AN AGATE LEXICON—DICTIONARY OF RUDENESS, CONTAINING
COARSE, DERISIVE, MALICIOUS, AND INSULTING EXPRES-
SIONS USED AGAINST THE MASTER JAMES AGATE BY HIS
ENEMIES AND MOCKERS

The Contemporary Theatre

Literary fal-lals sit upon Mr Agate like a straw hat on the
head of an intelligent dray-horse. *Granta*

Playing at Hazlitt. . . . His criticism of drama is neglig-
ible. . . . Reduces himself to the level of his most stupid
readers. *Isis*

Playgoing

Gets one absolutely nowhere.

Theatre World

Mr Agate can be strangely silly about Greek drama . . .
One thinks one is tired of Mr Agate on Bernhardt.

Manchester Guardian

As Mr Drinkwater says, "after all, critics are no stupider
than other people because they are compelled to make public
exhibitions of their stupidity." In Mr Agate's case there does
not seem to have been compulsion.

PETER TRAILL, in *The Outlook*

At Half-past Eight

Mr Agate is only interested in the theatre for Mr Agate's
sake . . . Mr Agate, in short, has not yet made up his mind
about himself. Is he a hearty fellow pretending to be a man
of letters, or is he a man of letters pretending to be a hearty
fellow? Mr Agate will probably say that he is not pretending
to be one or the other, and that he sees nothing to prevent a
writer from being as hearty as a publican. But I will not be
put off by such retorts. When I read his professions of affec-
tion for pugilists and jockeys and bookmakers and publicans, I
suspect that he is engaged in persuading himself rather than
his readers that his professions are sound: and I feel certain
that when Mr Agate quaffs tankards of foaming beer (if beer
ever foams nowadays) with racecourse touts in little back-
street pubs., the conversation consists largely of long pauses.
I can hear Mr Agate saying to himself, on one of these occa-
sions, "My God, I must keep on being hearty or this chap'll
go home!"

ST JOHN ERYNE, in the *Observer*

Fantasies and Impromptus

Shows how good a writer Mr Agate could be if he would stop thinking himself no end of a fellow.

Time and Tide

The reason why Mr Agate does not write essays is that he has no style . . .

LEONARD WOOLF, in *The Nation*

Blessed are the Rich

For a dramatic critic who has been so often praised, he writes an amazingly poor novel. *Blessed are the Rich* is not only bad negatively; it is not only weak in construction, clumsy in its episodes, and uninteresting in its characters; it carries more positive vices on its back than even a good novel could bear. The smallest incident sets the author off on an address to the reader, and the addresses are either pointless or platitudinous. The book is full of antipathies, either so obscure that nobody can share them, or so commonly expressed by everybody that no one wants to see them expressed again.

EDWIN MUIR, in *The Nation*

Stands accused of palming off on the public a worn-out and patched assemblage of other tailors' dummies.

Yorkshire Observer

On an English Screen

Why blame Mr Agate? Well, we have no intention of blaming him. We once hoped better of him: but if he hopes no better of himself, we will forgo our praise and our censure.

The Spectator

Agate's Folly

We have seen much of this sort of thing in the pages of the *Sunday Times*, but there it seemed to glow with a certain vivacity among its bleak and dingy surroundings. Confined within the boundaries of a book, however, it is intolerable.

Oxford Magazine

His heart isn't in his job.

London Mercury

The Common Touch

Unduly turgid and tedious.

Isis

Their Hour upon the Stage

Betrays the determination to wrest grace and delight from material that is barren, the masturbative itch that is the blight of English dramatic criticism.

Granta

Gemel in London

Is proof, if further proof be needed, that Mr Agate's intelligence, high spirits, and considerable information are wasted when spent upon novels. . . . Elephantine archness. . . . Nobody so clever succeeded in producing a book so stupid.

H. C. HARWOOD, in *The Outlook*

Is it strictly necessary to make words so hideous ?

Daily Express

Rachel

A disappointment. . . . Mr Agate goes on about Rachel till he stops, and then begins again.

Cambridge Review

Ego

Resembles the black puddings an admirer sent me the other day from Bolton, where they use the pig's squeals for flavouring !

E. B. OSBORN, in *The Morning Post*

Why should we be interested in Mr Agate's milkman ?

Church of England Newspaper

Ego 2

Blissfully certain of his own importance and the unimportance of general standards of taste. . . .

HUMBERT WOLFE, in the *Observer*

Ego 3

Pepys no doubt seems to him an odd little squirrel to have won immortality.

G. W. STONIER, in the *New Statesman*

July 28 Two more *Mesoterics* :

Tuesday. From Denis Mackail's *Life with Topsy* :

I don't see why one shouldn't like a play that runs for nearly three hundred performances at the largest theatre in London ; even if I still can't explain why the entrance of the chorus on a fleet of bicycles should have moved me to the very depths of my soul. It did, though. And if I'm going to be frank and shameless about it, I shall now confirm your worst

suspensions of my taste. For when I attended a performance of *The Cherry Orchard* at the Old Vic, later in the same year, I came home and entered my opinion that it was an insolent piece of amateurish drivel.

From Hector Bolitho's *War in the Strand* :

One can no longer think of the Savoy Hotel as being merely a building of stone and steel. It has something of the spirit inhabiting a great ship which has ridden through storms. The scars are a visible sign of its physical courage. . . . Eldon came to dinner—Santarelli made a gesture and gave us a mixed grill ; a luxury over which we bowed our heads in silent mastication.

July 29 Have discovered that, being a Unitarian, I am *Wednesday.* technically not a Christian. Shall insist upon all future Aguecheeks saying, "Methinks sometimes I have no more wit than a Christian, a Unitarian, or an ordinary man has."

Greatly disappointed at finding Farjeon's new revue *Light and Shade* at the Ambassador's tedious and pretentious. Bertie is our best revue brain. Shall get out of it on Sunday by quoting Knight on *Le Misanthrope*. "It seeks to expose to vulgar gaze a nature which vulgar perceptions can never penetrate. It is painful, if edifying, to watch the efforts to force into drollery the biting phrases of Alceste out of regard for a public which, hearing of Molière as a comic writer, waits for comic scenes." Shall ask if the fault to-night was in our perceptions. This will deceive nobody, and not offend Bertie.

Have given to the Autograph Letter Department of the Red Cross Sale Sarah Bernhardt's card thanking my brother Edward for some work he did for her in 1916 : "Mon cher Edward, Voici un modeste remerciement de votre joli travail. Nous aurons l'occasion de nous retrouver. Mille mercis et au revoir." At the head, in lavender, is her device : QUAND MÊME.

July 30 Meric Dobson, now a sub-lieutenant in the *Thursday.* R.N.V.R., told me this. During his recent leave he visited a travelling circus near Bristol. Introducing "Miss Zelfredo, the world-famous snake-charmer," the ring-master said : "It is with great regret that I have to announce one of the great tragedies of the Ring. Doreen Zelfredo's

python, which had been with her for six years, died on Friday at Knowle. I am sure the audience will join with me in sympathy for Doreen, and in the wish that she may soon find a new pal. If ever woman loved a snake Doreen did. Miss Zelfredo will now enter the ring and perform her act without her snake."

July 81 *Re* this question of getting to know Americans, and
Friday. Americans getting to know us. I mean something
 more than observing differences and respecting them.

Have we ever understood the French, or they us? Anybody who has toured the battlefields of the last war must remember the monument to Guynemer. This is essentially French in its exquisiteness of form and the unashamed rhetoric of its inscription. At the top of a tall, elegant column is a flying stork, neck and legs outstretched. On the plinth is the bronze inscription "Héros légendaire tombé en plein ciel de gloire." A mile or so farther on stands another monument—the head and shoulders of a soldier. On the granite front is the single word "Canada." On the sides, in raised yet hardly decipherable lettering, is the bare statement: "On this spot 18,000 Canadians on the British left withstood the first German gas attack, April 22–24, 1915. Two thousand fell and were buried here." Not a word about legendary heroes or skies of glory. As an Englishman, I must hold the same view of French monuments that I do of the French dramatists Racine and Corneille: that they are stilted and fussy. Doubtless the French regard our English monuments in the way they regard our Shakespeare, as something plain and unemotional to the point of barbarism. It is as though some glittering rainbow were to try to come to terms with the groundswell of an ocean. But I am not wholly English, in the sense that, being steeped in the French language since I was a child, I can bring, or believe I can bring, a French mind to French things. There is a German strain in me too, or rather a German-Jewish strain. One cannot be in daily contact and friendship with German Jews for twenty years, as I was in Manchester, without beginning to see things from the German-Jewish point of view. A great stumbling-block between the English and the Americans is that we are too tongue-tied and they are too voluble. We make a fetish of understatement; they are always telling California they're coming. Americans advance-publicise

the things they are going to accomplish ; we first do them, and then talk about something else. I saw a film to-night in which an English Brass-hat, dispatching a Commando on its desperate mission, said, " Of course some of you won't come back. But you can't have everything, and you will have had a lot of fun." The young American in the film couldn't understand this. I am not surprised. We must expect not to understand a great many things about them. And realise that they have had the worst possible ambassador in Hollywood. Judging Americans by their films, I went over there five years ago prepared to dislike them *en masse* and individually. Repented of this later.

August 1 Picked up for half-a-crown *The Cowells in America*,
Saturday. published eight years ago. The diary of Mrs Sam Cowell during her husband's concert tour in America in the years 1860-1861. Willson Disher, who edits it, writes, " It records a change in an Englishwoman's frame of mind, from detached astonishment at the behaviour of Americans to an excited partisanship on the outbreak of Civil War, which makes her forget the very prevalent idea that an Englishman and an American are stock jests, one to the other." An entrancing book which I read this morning by the light of a single candle till 4 p.m., my black-out arrangements having gone wrong. Entrancing as to four-fifths of it ; the last part, being almost entirely about the Civil War, though very well done, is no longer of interest. Why should we bother what Mrs Cowell thinks will happen ? We know what happened. As against this there is a first-class account of a Hamlet by the German actor Pfeiffer :

There were no " situations "—no " effects." " Is it the king ? " was enquired eagerly enough, but without an attitude ; indeed Hamlet was behind his Mother's chair when asking the question. How well do I remember Charles Kean's great *slide* from the back of the stage to the footlights, and his thrilling whisper.

And another description, again excellent, of Edwin Booth as Richelieu :

Down came *that* statue from its pedestal ! He looked like an old woman, and played alternately as if in the last agonies of

death from exhaustion, and the raging passion of a man in full health. I liked him so little that I shall say no more about him.

And here is a perfect story :

There is a company of actors here, at the Theatre, and among them is a Mr Salisbury, who is always poor, is a great rascal, but of wit and humour. At a Theatre where he was acting Forrest came as a star. During the last rehearsal of *Virgilius* Mr Salisbury, who had to play Appius Claudius, walked up to the great tragedian and said, "Forrest, if you have no objection I should like to change parts with you. I don't know a line of Appius Claudius, and I am quite perfect in *Virgilius*."

This, and not the dead bones of history, is what I want a Diarist to give me.

August 2 Sunday. Anticipating the criticism that this Diary contains too little about the war abroad, I give here our leader-writers' unanimous opinion that last week furnished two "decisive" battles on the Don, and that this week we are to look forward to three more. Do I not write enough about the way the war is affecting us here in London ? I am prepared to counter this also. The Government asked the country to spend the Bank Holiday week-end at home. Result, according to the *Sunday Pictorial* :

THEY TRAVELLED IN MILLIONS

The rush at Paddington Station was worse than a peace-time August holiday Saturday. One train left with eighty people standing in the guard's van. Mothers with babies in arms stood in corridors.

Record war-time exodus was reported from Birmingham. Thousands stormed the trains on Friday evening, intending to travel through the night. They failed, and spent the night on the station. The rush at Cardiff also was heavier than in peace-time.

At Crewe it came to blows when crowds were struggling for the trains. Many people were on the station from 8 P.M. on Friday to 10 A.M. yesterday. One station queue at Liverpool was three deep and a quarter of a mile long.

And here's something else. From the *Sunday Dispatch* :

NO MORE TOWELS ON TRAINS

There are to be no more towels on trains. During the last 12 months more than 1,000,000 have been taken from trains and it is not possible to replace them.

And this, again, from the *Sunday Pictorial* :

Boilers have been installed all over the country to decontaminate clothing if gas is ever used. The treatment demands boiling—which means boiling your suits and woollies and shoes, as well as your cotton dresses and shirts. So after a gas raid thousands of people will find themselves with half their clothes ruined.

If that were inevitable it wouldn't matter. But it isn't. Chemists of the Bradford Corporation have discovered a new kind of soap that when dissolved in water decontaminates clothing without heat.

The Fighting French authorities over here have bought supplies of the product for their own troops. And because they realise that you can't boil a ship at sea if it is sprayed with gas. But our Government isn't interested in the discovery. They've got the boilers and they mean to use them—even if they ruin millions of suits and pairs of shoes.

May I h'ask, in Cicely Courtneidge's best Harringay accent, who, in a hundred years' time, or ten, is going to care about the number of to-day's excursionists, their towels, or the Government's arrangements for decontaminating clothes ?

August 3 To continue in the vein. That I refuse to diarise about
Monday. the war does not mean that it is never in my mind.

I often find myself backsliding into thought about it. Over this morning's breakfast I considered the question of the Second Front, and as the match at Lord's doesn't start for another hour will here and now set down the sum of my idle, useless, and, as events will assuredly prove, wrong-headed speculations on the subject. Since my intelligence is presumably not lower than that of the man in the street, what follows may be taken as representing the view of the war situation generally held on the Bank Holiday of 1942. Except that in what follows I shall attempt a plan, whereas the average man is content with a blur.

First let me go back a little. In Mrs Schaufler's play about Parnell there is a conversation between Gladstone and Tim Healy which runs as follows :

TIM HEALY. I cannot reconcile your sympathetic thoughts with your actions, Mr Gladstone. You have issued a public letter printed in the newspapers in which you say that unless Parnell resigns you will feel called upon to do so.

GLADSTONE (*smiling quietly*). Did I say I would resign, Mr Healy ?

HEALY. You said—well—every one took it to mean that. What did you mean, Mr Gladstone ?

GLADSTONE. I think I cannot usefully add to what I have already written.

Now let me turn to the statement issued simultaneously in Washington and London after the meeting of Roosevelt and Churchill : " Full understanding was reached by the two parties with regard to the urgent tasks of creating a second front in Europe in 1942." I immediately think of Gladstone, and how he could have slipped out of this as easily as out of one of his collars. Indeed, he would not have thought twice about issuing such a statement, well knowing that he had made up his mind against a second front. But there is more honesty in Roosevelt's little finger or Churchill's big toe than in the whole of the G.O.M.'s body—doubtless that old fox took astuteness for sincerity—and I am prepared to believe that the joint statement meant nine-tenths of what it looked like meaning—*viz.*, that the two parties would face up to the urgent tasks with the implied reservation that facing up included the question of feasibility.

Let me go on to the situation to-day. If the job turns out not to be feasible, why then there's an end to it. But let me suppose that it *is* feasible. Here the average man says, " Why don't we set about it ? Why waste time ? " The point is that a thing may be both feasible and inadvisable, taking feasible to mean " capable of being set on foot," and not " capable of being carried to a successful conclusion." There are, then, four possibilities attending on the feasible thing :

- A. The second front maintains itself in being, and reduces the pressure on Russia. Russia holds.
- B. The second front maintains itself in being. In spite of this Russia fails to hold.

- C. The second front ends in another Dunkirk or worse. Russia holds.
- D. Another Dunkirk or worse. Russia fails to hold.

Now consider the result in each case :

- A. This means winning the war.
- B. We are no worse off than before.
- C. We are distinctly worse off than before.
- D. We lose the war or are prevented from winning it.
Unless this can be done from the air—a question about which I can form no opinion.

Looking at the matter realistically, and putting aside the question of what Russia may have understood by the Washington-London agreement, I conclude that

A SECOND FRONT CONTAINS THE SEEDS OF BOTH TOTAL VICTORY AND TOTAL DEFEAT.

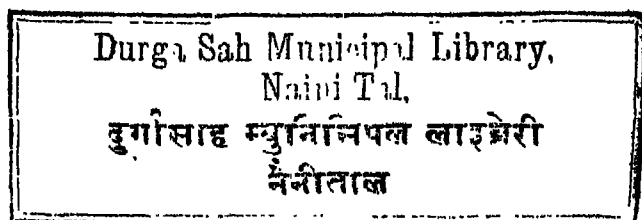
Whereas

THE ABSENCE OF A SECOND FRONT POSTPONES THE FIRST BUT DOES NOT INVITE THE SECOND.

I don't say that the foregoing conclusions are right. I am even doubtful about the premises. It is the best I can do in the way of clear thinking about such data as I possess. And what data ! I do not know to within 100,000 tons what daily supplies would be necessary to keep an army of 1,000,000 in the field. Even if I knew this I could not calculate how much shipping would be required according as the invasion takes place at Boulogne, Biarritz, or Narvik. Even if I could, I still should not know whether we have the ships and can safeguard them. Or how many aeroplanes would be necessary, and whether we have these. The upshot of all my brilliant thinking, therefore, is that I *ought not to have, have not, and will not allow myself to have,* any view as to whether there should be a second front or not. The whole question is entirely above my competence. In the meantime George Mathew, who has as logical a brain as any man I know, gives next week as the probable time, and over a month ago I heard "from the best possible source" that the actual date is the day after to-morrow. That's how the chatter

goes. And I return to my old position : What possible interest will attach in a hundred years, or even by the time this book is published, to amateur guess-work about a matter whose event will then be known ?

I suggest that my critics should use their brains—once in a wee while does nobody any harm—and judge what I write by the rule of what I attempt, and not by something they would have preferred that I should attempt. What, then, is *Ego 5* ? It is a record of the intellectual life of one moving in a circle of writers, journalists, theatre-folk, and musicians in the second and third years of the present war, of the letters he received, and the good things he heard.



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